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1.1 *Background to this Strategic Plan*

- *Who we are*
- *What we do*
- *Why this Strategic Plan*

County Donegal is home to a unique culture and way of life, and has seen a very welcome focus on its cultural development in the last decade or so. Donegal County Council is the lead player in developing the County's cultural life in partnership with a range of public and community agencies.

- ✓ Donegal County Council is the democratically elected and locally accountable government body for the County, and the lead cultural service provider in the County providing a service on behalf of the local authority and the community. It seeks to provide an effective, efficient and equitable service to all members of the community.
- ✓ It is an accessible and developmental service which people choose to use, and builds on previous experience of the nature and range of services required by the public.
- ✓ Most cultural services provided by the Council are free to the public, and are funded by the Council. The Council works very closely and in partnership with the public.
- ✓ Information provision is an important element in Libraries, Arts, Museum and Archives – information to the general public, interest groups at local & national level, to councillors and staff of the Council. Information is provided to enquirers, through the websites – www.donegal.ie and www.donegalculture.com – and through outreach.

There have been 2 library development programmes since the mid 1980s, covering the periods 1985-1994 and 1995-1999. This period also saw development programmes for the Museum Service and the Arts. The Council began the process of developing its archives and records in 1999. The Council believes that there will be considerable benefits in planning its cultural services in a coordinated way and for this reason has prepared this Strategic Plan for Libraries, Arts, Museum and Archives.

The Council is obliged by the Local Government Act 1994 as a library authority, to prepare 5-year development programmes. That Act also placed a statutory obligation on local authorities for the first time to preserve and provide access to their records and archives. Legislative provisions on local authority museum services and for arts promotion are awaited.

The library elements of this plan will be implemented in the new context set by *Branching Out* the government's plan to develop a new library service geared to the needs of the 21st century, and *National Network: Local Service* the public library standards prepared by the Library Association of Ireland.

Since first employing an Arts Organizer in 1988 the Council has built up a growing relationship with the Arts Council, and the proposals for the contemporary and traditional arts will be implemented in the context of the Arts Council's current Arts Plan.

The Council also enjoys a developing relationship with the Heritage Council, and the proposals for the Museum Service and Archives will be implemented in the context of national priorities set by the Heritage Council (including the County Museum's participation in the Standards & Accreditation Scheme and its designation under the National Cultural Institutions Act) and the statutory requirements regarding the preservation of and access to archives and records laid down by the Local Government Act 1994.

1.2 *County Donegal at the beginning of the 21st century*

Population

The population of County Donegal in the 1996 census was 129,994. This represented a slight increase in population over the 1991 census. In terms of demographic change, Donegal was affected to a lesser degree than some other western counties by the upsurge of emigration which affected the entire country during the 1980's. It should be noted that a population growth of almost 20% took place in the county between 1971 and 1986. The most marked increase took place in the combined Letterkenny urban and rural districts. The population increased by one-third between 1971 and 1981 and a further 10.9% in the subsequent 5-year period. Between 1986 and 1991, the county as a whole lost 1.2% of its population. However, in the north east of the county, Letterkenny and Inishowen districts, the population increased by 2.6%, and the increase between 1991 and 1996 in this area was 3.5%.

In terms of age structure, 38% of the population of Donegal are 19 years or under, which is proportionately higher than the national figure (36.1%). The higher than average numbers in this age group offer a greater challenge to provide jobs in the near future. In addition to that, the high proportion of residents under the age of 15 years and over the age of 60 years means that the county has a large number of people in the dependent category. Forecasts since the 1996 census indicate that the general trend in respect of births will be downwards.

Employment / Unemployment

Donegal has a total labour force of 47,092. The number unemployed amounted to 10,293 or 25.4% of the labour force. At that time it was the highest of any county in Ireland, and the county continues to one of the three worst affected counties. The unemployment rate displays variation and concentrations in spatial areas of the county. Analysis of the figures indicates that more than 25% of the total figure on the "live register" were aged 25 years or under. This figure undoubtedly would have been higher had it not been for the net emigration which had taken place in the period 1980 to 1994.

Area, Location and Access

Donegal lies in the north west of Ireland bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the south west, west and north and by the counties of Derry, Tyrone, Fermanagh and Leitrim to the east and south east. It is the northern most county in Ireland. Its sense of an identity separate somewhat from the rest of the Republic of Ireland is reinforced by the fact that it has a border of approximately 140km with Northern Ireland and only 9 km with the rest of the Republic. The area of the county is 483,042 hectares (1,193,621 acres). The

majority of this consists of upland bog and rough pasture with an elevation in excess of 600 ft., 160,000 hectares of agriculture and 10,117 hectares of water.

While Ireland is considered to suffer spatial and economic peripherality in the EU context, this is particularly the case with Donegal which is on the periphery of Ireland. Its location has been perceived for many years as a distinct disadvantage. Improvements, particularly to major roads, are allowing greater access into the county particularly from the south (N15) and also from the north (N13), but local roads are below standard, particularly those connecting the west to the N13 and N15, and the poor state of local transportation and roads impacts on people's quality of life. This is especially true of older people and children; 44% of the population in Donegal are dependent and the lack of proper rural transport services is a major negative factor. There is a need for better road access into the county in particular the upgrading of the N2. In cultural terms, however, its location adds to its distinct identity.

Whilst proximity to Northern Ireland, in the past, may have acted as a deterrent for economic development in the county, the recent cessation of violence and the peace process open up new opportunities for the county in the areas of industry and tourism. The geographical location of the county would indicate that particularly in the area of tourism possibilities exist for authorities on both sides of the border to adopt a joint marketing approach with a view to marketing the north of Ireland (the geographic area) as a tourism destination.

County Donegal is also served by Aerphort Dhún na nGall, the regional airport in Carraig Fhine / Carrickfin. With minor improvements, it has the capacity to be a major factor in the development of the County in terms of tourism and commercial/industrial activity.

The Local Economy

The economy to a large extent still depends upon agriculture. This is reflected in the fact that approximately 20% of the economically active population are engaged in primary agriculture. The mainstay remains in the area of sheep rearing in the upland areas and cattle farming in the lowland areas. In addition to this, barley, oats and potatoes are produced.

Donegal is the most important sea fishing county in Ireland and Killybegs is its busiest fishing port representing approximately 25% of the national catch. Primary types of fish being landed in the county include herring and mackerel although large quantities of higher value fish (white fish) are also landed at various ports throughout the county including Killybegs, Burtonport, Greencastle, Moville and Rathmullan. In addition to sea fishing, Donegal has an aquaculture sector which is increasing in importance, both in the fin-fish and shellfish areas. In the manufacturing sector, textiles have been in place for many years. This sector continues to be of importance despite recent setbacks at McCarters/Fruit of the Loom.

The natural features of County Donegal with its rugged coastline, scenic mountains and excellent natural resources such as angling, natural environment/scenery form a base in which the tourism industry continues to expand with a marked increase over the past number of years from continental visitors. The peace process in Northern Ireland also ensures an increase in the number of tourists from both Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The tourism sector provides much needed employment growth to the county and tourism income forms an essential part of the economic growth of both urban and rural areas in County Donegal. Cultural tourism, focused on the Gaelic language and culture, and on its literary traditions in both languages, will be a major element in attracting visitors.

The infrastructure of County Donegal has improved greatly over the past number of years. In particular the main arteries into Co. Donegal from the south (the N15) and from the North the (N13) are now of high quality. However, local roads are below standard, particularly those connecting the west to the N13 and N15. While here has been significant development by Donegal County Council in the improvement of the sanitary services infrastructure (e.g. the Killybegs scheme and Pollan Dam schemes), sanitary services require upgrading or new installations in many parts of the County, especially in Gaeltacht areas.

Plans are under way to bring broadband and fibre optic communications networks to Donegal, but while the major towns will be connected, this may serve to reinforce the peripherality of smaller towns and rural areas. The setting up of the BMW Region is a recognition of the fact of regional inequality within the state, but the danger exists of regional inequality growing within the county unless this issue is seriously addressed.

County Donegal is a designated border county for EU Structural Funds, INTERREG and International Fund for Ireland purposes. These sources of support have and will continue to provide a much needed resource for the social and economic development and structural adjustment of County Donegal.

Culture and Education

Donegal has the largest Gaeltacht area in the country with a population of 24,504 people. It is mainly to the west of the County and covers approximately 25% of the land area. Early school leaving is a major problem in some parts of the county, not least Inishowen; 59.1% of the adult population in the peninsula are classified as early school leavers, compared with the national average of 36.1%..

Detailed information regarding cultural infrastructure and the levels of cultural activities in the County is set out in Section 1.3.

1.3 Progress in Cultural Services in the 1980s & 1990s

“ionmholta malairt bhisigh”
a change for the better is praiseworthy
Eochaidh Ó hEodhasa

1.3.1 *Taking Stock: Review of Library Development 1985-1999*

While considerable development of library infrastructure took place in Ireland during the 1970s, little progress was made in County Donegal. To begin the work of bringing the library service up to national and European standards, Donegal County Council adopted library development programmes in 1985 and 1995. The period 1985-1999 saw considerable progress towards achieving the objectives set out in these library development programmes, despite the low base from which development started and the severe fiscal constraints which obtained for much of the period. By the end of 1999 a modern library and information service had been established in Donegal in a growing number of service points, the profile of the service had been raised significantly, and a solid basis laid for future development.

The first library development programme was concerned with preparing the ground for development, with sketching out what a modern developed Library Service would be. It sought to begin the actual development process through the opening of a number of service points, and sought to build a momentum behind the development of the Library Service.

The second programme, *Eolas agus Samhlaíocht*, was concerned with establishing the Central Library in its role as the flagship of the service, and with opening other important service points in order to build a quantum mass of modern libraries in County Donegal.

The next programme will seek to deepen as well as extend the service. It will seek to put in place the back-up and functional expertise at county-wide level, and to extend the network of modern libraries so as to reach all areas of the County.

1 Central Library & Arts Centre

The Council originally intended to build the Central Library and Library Administration Centre in one complex. In 1988, however, given the likelihood that the funding for a project of this size would not be forthcoming in the near future, the Council decided to proceed with the Central Library, to be built along with an Arts Centre. The project went to tender in March 1993, and work began on site in December of that year, with construction completed in the first half of 1995. The Library opened to the public in August 1995, and was officially opened by Brendan Howlin, T.D., Minister for the Environment the following November. The Central Library has more than met the Council's expectations for the facility. It is the county's main resource for children's and adult lending, and for local studies and research, serving the largest population centre in Donegal; it also backs up, often in unseen ways, the

work of each service point in the Library network. It is perhaps in the cross-fertilisation between libraries and the arts that the Central Library & Arts Centre has come into its own, with staff at the Central Library encouraging users to visit exhibitions and attend performances at the Arts Centre. Housing the two facilities under one roof has strongly encouraged the view that the arts are really for everyone. [A review of activities at the Arts Centre is found at p17ff below].

2 Other Library Infrastructure

In 1985 the Council secured funding from the Special Border Areas Programme of the ERDF to renovate Lifford Courthouse to house **Lifford Community Library**; in 1998 the Library was relocated to larger premises.

D'osclaíodh **Leabharlann Ghaoth Dobhair** i 1991 in áras nua-choirithe Tí Phobail na Doirí Beaga. Ba í seo an céad Leabharlann Gaeltachta ar leith, agus tá réimse maith leabhair agus irisí sa teanga Ghaeilge le fáil inti. Is í an Ghaeilge príomhteanga na Leabharlainne seo agus tá na fograí uilig, páipeáras is ar leanas, deánta amach as Gaeilge nó táid dhá-theangach.

In 1991, following a number of years of campaigning and fund raising by the local community in Ramelton, the completely refurbished Old Meetinghouse was opened to the public as **Ramelton Community Library**. This is a very important and historic building; it is the oldest extant building associated with Presbyterian worship in Ireland, dating in part to the 1640s.

Bunrana is the second largest population centre in the County. A former Presbyterian church was purchased in 1988, with a view to refurbishing and extending it as **Bunrana Community Library**. Approval to go to tender was received in 1997. Work began in November of the following year, and building was completed in September 1999. The new Library opened to the public in December 1999, and was officially opened by Noel Dempsey, T.D., Minister for the Environment & Local Government in February 2000.

Dornán blianta ó shin, smaonaíodh ar athchóiriú a dhéanamh ar shean teach phobail ar An Clochán Liath lena chur in oiriúint mar **Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann**. De bhar an rannpháirtíocht idir an phobail, an Chomhairle Chontae agus Forbairt na Rosann d'éirigh linn an Leabharlann a fhorbairt. D'osclaíodh an Leabharlann i Mí Bealtaine 1999.

Carndonagh Community Library and **Milford Community Library** will be integral parts of the Area Offices in these two towns. The Council decided to include Community Libraries in the Area Offices along with other services, and intends that this will lead to a greater degree of integration between the services than would otherwise be possible. The Libraries are prominently located at the front of both buildings. The projected opening date is early in 2001.

A number of new **vehicles** were purchased since 1985. In 1986 a Mercedes Benz 608D was bought and fitted out as a schools/delivery van. In 1989 the 608D was refitted as a Mobile Library as the old Mobile Library van was increasingly unsuitable, and early in 1990 a Mercedes 308D was bought and fitted out as a delivery/general purposes van. In 1997 a state of the art Mobile Library vehicle took to the roads of Donegal, providing a much improved service to the small communities of the county.

3 Services & Resources

Improved Opening Hours

The opening of 6 new Libraries since 1985 has meant, amongst other things, vastly improved levels of service to the public, and greatly increased opening hours. In the case of the Central Library, Letterkenny the hours increased from 12 per week to 42.5. In the case of Ramelton, where there had not been a service for many years, the hours increased from none to 23, and in Bunrana the hours increased from 9 to 38.5. The Council has put great emphasis on having Libraries available to the public at times which suit them; thus each new service point is open on 2 late evenings each week and Saturdays.

Library Collections

The Library has given special attention to two sectors in its expenditure on books and other materials - children's stock and Donegal Studies. In 1997 a collection development policy was adopted by the Council, covering selection criteria, stock management, training and other issues.

a) Children's stock

Provision for children is of vital importance, as reading is both a gateway to knowledge, and a means of sharpening comprehension and learning skills. The Library Service undertakes to select books, audio-visual, multi-media, and other materials designed to stimulate and improve the minds and imaginations of young people, encourage and foster their intellectual and social development, and enable them to become independent, resourceful citizens of the future. The collection development policy gives special attention to the needs of teenagers and young adults, encouraging the purchase of teen oriented books, magazines, and audio-visual materials. It was agreed that 30% of total bookfund expenditure will be on books and other materials for children and young people, and this target has been met.

b) Donegal Studies

A Donegal Interest collection has been placed in each library in the County, and the Library has sought to provide at least 1 copy of each book, article etc. by Donegal authors or about Donegal subjects in the Donegal Studies Collection, which is housed in the Central Library. In 1984 the Library began to maintain complete files of all the Donegal newspapers and magazines. Microfilm runs of local papers and of other resources relevant to the study of the history and culture of the County are now available in a number of libraries.

Information & Communications Technologies

The Council began to install the Genesis automated library system in 1995, following a detailed examination of how we might best use information and

communications technologies to enhance the service to the public. The Central Library and the Administrative Centre were automated initially; Buncrana Community Library and Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann were added to the system during 1999. Planning has been completed for the extension of the system to Carndonagh and Milford. Funding was received from central government to provide public access to the internet in 6 libraries, beginning in 1999, after the pilot phase in Central Library which began in 1998.

Promotion and Participation

In the early 1980s the profile of the library service and the awareness of the benefits of using the library had been raised considerably through a regular series of promotional campaigns. In 1996 a policy on library usage was adopted, setting targets for usage for both children and adults at developed service points. These targets were exceeded at the Central Library. Also in 1996 a policy was adopted on promotion and outreach, and that policy has been implemented in a growing number of service points. Attractive informational leaflets were published for Central Library, Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann, the Mobile Library and other service points, while a leaflet on Donegal Studies was published in both Gaelic and English language versions.

4 Staffing

Both library development programmes recognised that library objectives can only be achieved 1) if sufficient staff are provided at appropriate levels and 2) if staff are well trained and motivated. In a library service the satisfaction of user needs depends to a major extent on the motivation, flexibility, initiative, enthusiasm, creativity, memory, current awareness, flair and imagination of individual members of staff. These are fragile qualities compared to the more basic ones of punctuality, accuracy, conscientiousness and discipline, and the Council is determined that proper attention will be given in the training and education programme to inculcating staff with an appreciation of the importance of all of these qualities.

The Council recognises that a quality library service is one which presents friendly, welcoming, patient, expert and accessible staff, a wide range of desirable stock, comprehensive and rapid access to information, generous opening hours, attractive, comfortable and convenient premises, and one which is prepared to go to tremendous lengths to provide what its users require. The Council has placed emphasis on the role of staff in ensuring such a service. In 1996 two related policies were adopted: a policy on a staffing structure and a policy on staff training and education. Considerable progress has been made under both of these headings.

While much remains to be done to put in place the kind of staffing structure required by a modern library & information service, real progress was made. Staffing levels have increased from 23 to 33 in the lifetime of *Eolas agus Samhlaoícht*, while for some key grades - Assistant Librarians, Senior Library Assistants, Library Assistants, and Branch Librarians [20 hours+] - they have increased threefold, as shown in the following table

	1995	2000
Assistant Librarians	1	3
Senior Library Assistants	1	3
Library Assistants	2	6
Branch Librarians [20 hours+]	3	9.

With regard to training and development staff have been funded to pursue courses in library & information studies, leading to professional qualifications. Staff have also been funded to pursue courses in local studies, conversational Gaelic and IT, and have received in-service training on a wide range of other subjects.

5 Increased Funding for Libraries

Capital Spending

Donegal County Council did not avail of the Public Libraries Grants scheme until the mid 1980s. Since that time a total of £1,944,113 has been drawn down from the Department of the Environment to fund new buildings, bookstock, mobile and delivery vehicles and information technology.

Revenue Spending on Libraries

The amount spent on the operation and development of the Library Service has increased from a level of £201,012 for the year 1984 to £728,400 in 1999, rising to £923,200 in 2000. [The figure for 2001 is £1,092,700].

Library Resources: Bookfund

The amount spent on books and other materials grew significantly over the period, from £35,000 (1984) to £120,000 (1995), rising to £175,000 in 1999, £245,000 in 2000, and £285,000 in 2001. In addition the Council has received a total of £455,100 in capital funding for stock and the figure for School Libraries stock has risen from £6,500 in 1984 to £39,417 in 2000.

6 Evaluation

It is the Council's view that the public have the right to expect public bodies to account for the spending of their money. Donegal County Library has therefore prepared performance evaluation procedures, in order to demonstrate to users and taxpayers generally that expenditure on libraries is money well spent. The evaluation process includes the following key elements

- A statement of the objectives of the service, and how the objectives should be realised;
- a description of the service in its key aspects, and the constraints within which it works;
- a schedule of the performance measures and indicators which will be used;
- a mechanism for implementation, which will involve the setting of targets, and the collection and analysis of data.

This evaluation process will be fully implemented in the years ahead, in tandem with related procedures being put in place by the Department of the Environment & Local Government / An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

In Summary

New Libraries developed since 1984

Central Library
Leabharlann Ghaoth Dobhair ᵃ
Ramelton Community Library
Milford Community Library*

Buncrana Community Library
Lifford Community Library
Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann
Carndonagh Community Library*
* = fitted out but not yet open.

At advanced planning stage

Bundoran Community Library
Library Admin Centre

Donegal Town Community Library
Ballybofey/Stranorlar Community Library

To be developed

Ballyshannon Community Library
Killybegs Community Library
Moville Community Library
Leabharlann Phobail Ghaoth Dobhair ᵃ.

Glenties Community Library
Leabharlann P. Chloich Cheann Fhaola
Raphoe Community Library

Other Highlights

Computerisation of library procedures, including issuing of books, etc.
Introduction of public access to the internet
Bealtaine and Wainfest festivals, with Arts Promotion and Museum
Much enhanced Donegal Studies service
Beginnings of proper staffing structure.

Spending on Libraries

	<i>1984</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>[2001]</i>
Total Spending	£201,012	£923,200	[£1,092,700]
Bookfund	£35,000	£245,000	[£285,000]

Over the past decade, the contemporary and traditional arts in Donegal have experienced a degree of growth and development that is unprecedented for a rural Irish county. Donegal County Council has played a pivotal role in this upsurge of artistic activity through the active implementation of a broad range of arts promotion initiatives. The Arts Promotion Service was established in 1988, when the Council recruited an Arts Organiser, only the second local authority in the State to do so, and its arts development work to-date has been informed by two strategic plans - *Clár Forbairt Ealaíne* (1989) and the *Programme for the Development of The Arts* (1995).

Over the period 1988-1999, the Council has seen arts development as an integral element in the social, cultural and economic development of the county. The Council has also laid great stress on the practice of partnership; at national level with the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and with the Department of the Environment & Local Government; locally with a broad range of local and regional arts and other development agencies - Údarás na Gaeltachta, the North Western Health Board, North West Tourism Ltd., Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta, Inishowen Rural Development Ltd., Donegal Local Development Company Ltd., etc. The fruits of the last decade can be seen in the arts infrastructure and programmes of activities which are now in place and continue to grow.

1 Arts Infrastructure

The Abbey Centre, Ballyshannon

In 1989, when the former Abbey Cinema came on the market, the Council helped Ballyshannon Town Commissioners to purchase the facility on behalf of the local community. Following an extensive redevelopment programme – funded by the International Fund for Ireland, the Council, Ballyshannon Town Commissioners and The Abbey Centre Trust Ltd. – a new 350 seat, state-of-the-art performance and cinema facility, serving the south of the county, opened to the public in 1992. Managed by one full-time Venue Manager who reports to the Abbey Centre Trust Ltd., the Centre now presents a broad and very successful programme of commercial film, theatre, musical and community events. A Phase 2 development plan, funded by INTERREG and Donegal County Council, will see two additional film and performance auditoria, as well as an extended foyer space, open to the public in early 2001.

Letterkenny Arts Centre

Letterkenny Arts Centre opened in June 1995 as part of the new Central Library & Arts Centre. The work of the Centre is described at 3 below [p17ff].

An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny

An Grianán Theatre is Donegal's newest and largest state-of-the-art performance facility. The need for a purpose built theatre was identified in 1986-87, and the original plan was to build it along with the Central Library & Arts Centre. Since this was not possible it was decided to build the two facilities separately. The decision by the newly created Department of Arts,

Culture & the Gaeltacht to provide funding for arts facilities of regional importance in 1995 meant that the dream could become reality. Funding of £1.5M out of a total budget of £2.3M was provided by that Department, and together with the allocation of funding by Donegal County Council and Letterkenny UDC and a very successful local fundraising effort by the North West Theatre Project Ltd., work on An Grianán began in April 1998.

An Grianán Theatre opened its doors to the public in October 1999, and the official gala opening took place on 12th November 1999. It is operated and managed by the Letterkenny Theatre Management Company Ltd. on behalf of Donegal County Council and Letterkenny UDC. The new theatre presents a very successful and tremendously well received programme of theatre, music, dance, comedy, classical music, popular music and traditional arts. Its own in-house productions and its youth and education programme have both proved hugely successful.

Other Arts Infrastructure

Donegal's arts infrastructure network has been developing apace in recent times and there now exists a small but effective network of performance and exhibition facilities around the county. Many of these new facilities have come about as part of community development initiatives. Others have been initiated by artists, artists groups or private individuals as arts based projects or as business ventures. Some are dedicated workspaces while others have programmed arts events largely in response to the demands of local and visiting audiences.

In the Gaeltacht / West Donegal the most consistently active of these facilities include

- Ionad Cois Locha, Dún Lúiche (music performance and gallery space);
- Ceardlann a' Croisbhealaigh, An Fál Carrach (artists' studios and gallery space);
- Teach na hÉigse, An Fál Carrach (creative writing/educational courses);
- Cló Ceardlann na gCroc, Gort a'Choirce (artists workspace and visual arts workshops);
- Gealairí James Dixon, Oileán Thoraigh;
- Ionad Teampall Chróine, An Clochán Liath (performance, arts education and visual arts);
- Dunfanaghy Workhouse (music/theatre performance and gallery space).

In the South West, including Gaeltacht Iar-Dheisceart

- the Ardara Artists Resource Centre;
- Foras Chultúir Uladh, Gleann Cholm Cille (performance, arts education and visual arts);
- Taipéis Gaeil Studios, Gleann Cholm Cille (artists workspace, arts education and gallery);
- Summer Palace, Kilcar (writers' workspace, publishing house, readings and workshops).

In South Donegal, along with the Abbey Centre there are

- Ardnamona House, Lough Eske (music performance, arts educational and artists' residencies);
- Donegal Craft Village, Donegal Town (artists' workspaces).

Along with An Grianán Theatre and Letterkenny Arts Centre, Letterkenny and East Donegal is also served by

- Glebe Gallery, Churchill (professional gallery);
- Glenveagh National Park/Castle and Visitors Centre (performance arts);
- Balor Theatre, Ballybofey (performance and community arts);
- Letterkenny Artspace Studios (artists' workspace);
- Travart Studios & Gallery, Letterkenny (artists' workspace and gallery);
- Cavanacor Gallery, Ballindrait (professional gallery).

The principal arts facilities in Inishowen include

- Tullyarvan Mill, Bunrana (artists workspace & gallery, performance arts, community arts);
- Ballagh Artists Studios, Malin (artists workspace);
- Teach Thir Chonaill, Baile Lia Fionn (creative writing & traditional arts);
- Colgan Hall, Carndonagh (performance arts);
- McGrory's of Culdaff (performance arts); and
- Malin Parish Hall (performance arts).

2 Promoting the Arts

The Council aims to ensure the best possible range of opportunities for artistic expression, and the widest possible access to the arts for all the people of Donegal. In this context, artistic expression is taken to mean both a practical and an aesthetic engagement with the arts. Through its Arts Promotion Service, the Council operates a range of initiatives to stimulate and support the development of the arts in the County. Chief among these are the Scheme of Arts Grants and Artists' Bursaries, the Touring Arts Programme, supports for Cross Border Arts initiatives and the Countywide Programme of collaborative community arts projects.

The success of the Council's approach to promoting the arts has been recognised by the Arts Council with the inclusion of Donegal in its pilot Planning Scheme programme. It is expected that this will result in substantial additional arts funding being made available to Donegal County Council and to many other arts initiatives within the county between 1999 and 2002.

Public Art Programme

Donegal County Council initiated the Public Art Working Group in 1995 in order to maximise for the benefit of the county the opportunities presented by the Department of the Environment's 1% for Art Scheme. The scheme allows for the provision of artistic features and other arts initiatives in tandem with local authority capital projects. The Public Arts programme is co-ordinated and implemented by a group of senior officials from engineering, administrative and cultural service backgrounds. The work of the Public Art Working Group is guided by the principles laid down in the Public Art Policy and Strategy, a code of practice adopted by the Council in 1998. A wide range of commissions have been awarded to-date. These include public art

works at An Grianán Theatre, at the Central Library & Arts Centre, Letterkenny, at Bunrana Community Library, as part of social housing schemes in Ballyshannon, Bridgend, Porthall, Ballintra and Burtonport as well as at major road, beachfront and water treatment projects in Donegal Town, Bearnasmore, Bundoran and Stranorlar.

Donegal Arts Network

The setting up of the Donegal Arts Network in 1998 was itself an indication of the dynamism of the arts sector in the County. The Network represents over 30 community, independent and public body arts organisations – including Donegal County Council. The Network members are, in effect, the core of the arts sector in Donegal, the people who organise arts events on a professional basis and who work together to raise the profile of the arts locally, nationally and internationally. The Network also provides an excellent forum for the exchange of information, ideas and resources and has greatly facilitated communication and collaborative work within the arts sector as a whole. Letterkenny Arts Centre produces a quarterly review and listings magazine, *Donegal Culture* in association with the Network, and also maintains the www.donegalculture.com website. Administrative and financial assistance towards the running of the Network is provided by both Letterkenny Arts Centre and the Arts Promotion Service.

3 Arts Centre

Letterkenny Arts Centre is at an early stage in its development. It was opened in 1995 and consists of a single multi-purpose space (260sq m) in the new Central Library building in the town centre. The Centre specialises mainly in visual arts and community arts and presents a busy programme of exhibitions, performances and workshops in the Centre and other buildings. The Centre is the base for three important annual festivals: the *Bealtaine* Festival for older people in May, *Wainfest* for young people in October/November (both county-wide) and the Earagail Arts Festival in July. The Centre assists arts development throughout Donegal with the production of the Donegal Culture newsletter and web-site.

Policy

Letterkenny Arts Centre is an integral part of Donegal County Council's arts provision and is committed to providing a County wide service. The Centre works in close liaison with the Arts Organiser and in partnership with arts, community and statutory organisations in County Donegal and further afield. The Centre aims to further develop contemporary Cultural activity in County Donegal by:

- presenting a programme of arts and related events;
- co-ordinating a programme of arts classes/ workshops;
- initiating arts in the community projects in partnership with arts, community and statutory organisations;
- providing an information resource on arts and related matters, and raising the profile and assisting the development of the arts in County Donegal through media, publications, internet, networking and advocacy.

Developments to date

Letterkenny Arts Centre is directly operated by Donegal County Council and is the only local authority run Centre in Ireland. The first full-time Manager was appointed in September 1997 and an Assistant Manager was appointed in April 2000, but further staff positions are planned, with assistance from the Arts Council. The Centre currently receives revenue funding from the Arts Council and assistance from FÁS. The Centre has developed from a very low base in 1997 and needs to develop incrementally over the years ahead before reaching a minimum professional level and one which is comparable to other Irish arts centres. This development is reflected in the following figures:

TABLE 1 Arts Council and County Council Revenue Funding 1997 - 2000

	1997	1998	1999	2000
Arts Council	£ 20,000	£ 30,000	£ 39,000	£ 78,000
Donegal County Council	£ 8,800	£ 16,000	£ 32,000	£ 54,000
TOTAL	£ 39,200	£ 63,600	£ 94,600	£163,000

Current Programme

The Arts Centre presents a broad programme of professional and community arts and attempts to cater for everyone, with special emphasis on exhibitions and concerts. The exhibition programme includes international, Irish, local and community shows that all share a commitment to quality and local relevance. The music programme features a series of intimate high quality jazz, classical and traditional/roots concerts.

Capital Development

Following renovations in May 1999, made possible by an Arts Council capital grant, the premises in the Central Library building has become a dedicated exhibition space with occasional performances, and is no longer used for workshops. Further Arts Council capital grants have been made available in 1999 and 2000 towards a proposed atrium extension with an external street level entrance. The absence of a venue for workshops is a significant problem. There was a large number of workshops (more than 20 hours per week) at the Arts Centre during 1997/1998. The opening of An Grianán Theatre in October 1999 has further added to the need for workshop space. Attempts to secure space for workshops and community arts activities have to date not been successful, and a partnership approach with An Grianán has been discussed.

Consultants Report

Donegal County Council commissioned a report from an independent arts consultant in 2000. The report is a strong endorsement of the Centre's work to date but emphasises the need for significantly improved resources in relation to staff and building to maintain and continue these developments. Recommendations were made regarding staffing, management structures, programme of activities, education and outreach. The most important recommendation was that the Council should seek funding for a new integrated arts centre building.

4 Staffing

For ten years from 1988, the Council's arts development programme has been co-ordinated and delivered primarily by the Arts Organiser. More recently, however, a number of key new arts management personnel have been employed by the Council. In 1997, two years after it opened its doors to the public, a full-time Manager was appointed to run Letterkenny Arts Centre, the arts centre at the Central Library & Arts Centre. In early 2000, a full-time Assistant Manager was added to the Arts Centre team, in addition to the 3 part-time FÁS funded personnel. There is a recognition that the Arts Promotion Service – if it is to mean a complete and comprehensive arts development service throughout the whole of the County - cannot continue to be delivered by one Arts Organiser. The reorganisation of the Council on the Electoral Area basis offers opportunities to bring arts development work closer to local communities.

A revenue grant from the Arts Council enabled the Earagail Arts Festival to employ a part-time Festival Manager in 1999 and 2000. Although An Grianán Theatre is run by a separate board, the presence in the County of its 4 full-time staff of professional arts / technical staff is a significant boost to the arts.

5 Increased Funding for the Arts

The arts development programme is funded from the Council's own resources along with additional revenue and programme funding provided by the Arts Council. Other funding for specific arts events and projects managed by the Council has been accessed from time to time from other agencies such as the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands, the Department of the Environment & Local Government, Údarás na Gaeltachta, the NWHB, the British Council and various EU sponsored programmes.

In 1985, when the Council took responsibility for the arts from the RDO, annual spending was £5,000. 1988, the year in which the Arts Organizer was first employed, the Council provided £19,000 revenue funding for arts development, augmented by an Arts Council grant of £10,000, and a grant of £8,000 towards the salary of the Arts Organiser. By 2000 Donegal County Council's arts budget provision had risen to £632,300 with the Arts Council providing £160,000. Capital spending by Donegal County Council - towards The Abbey Centre/Ballyshannon, Letterkenny Arts Centre, An Grianán Theatre and the Public Art Programme – was close to £2.9m over the period 1988-1999, much of it sourced from national funding bodies.

The Council also liaises with and provides matching funding to other local arts and community development groups which in turn has enabled them to access substantial additional funding from such sources as the EU Kaleidoscope Programme and other EU sponsored arts and cultural development initiatives, the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, LEADER I and II, Area Development Management and the Arts Council.

6 Evaluation

Donegal County Council, in association with the Arts Council, is currently developing a process by which its arts development programme can be regularly monitored and evaluated in an appropriate and well structured fashion.

This evaluation process will contain the following key elements –

- a statement of the key objectives of the programme and an outline as to how these objectives should be realised.
- a description of the arts sector in Donegal and an outline of the cultural, social and economic context in which the arts development programme will work.
- detailed documentation – by written word, photographic, audio and video recording - of the programme.
- a schedule of the appropriate performance measures and performance indicators which will be used.

The evaluation process will be fully implemented in the years ahead, alongside related procedures being put in place by the Department of the Environment & Local Government and the Arts Council.

1.3.3 Festivals promoted by Donegal County Council

Over the past ten years the Council has initiated and developed three major cultural festivals. The festivals present programmes of events which are widely dispersed so as to best serve the many small towns, villages and rural communities which are a feature of the county.

The **Bealtaine Festival** is aimed specifically at older people, and programmes art workshop, storytelling, music, theatre and film events at various libraries, arts, community and day centre venues throughout the county over the month of May. The Bealtaine Festival is co-ordinated by the Library Service and Letterkenny Arts Centre with additional input from Údarás na Gaeltachta.

The **Wainfest** (incorporating Children's Book Festival in Donegal) takes place in November and presents a wide ranging programme of readings, creative writing and arts events for children in libraries, schools and arts and community venues throughout the county. The festival is co-ordinated by the Library Service and Letterkenny Arts Centre with support from Údarás na Gaeltachta.

The **Earagail Arts Festival** which takes place in mid July is the county's premier festival event. Focusing on the area of North and North West Donegal in the shadow of Mount Errigal, this multi-disciplinary, bilingual event has grown considerably in recent years, and has recently included events in Inishowen, Fanad and the Lagan, as well as Toraigh and An Clochán Liath/Dungloe in the West. It is organised by the Arts Promotion Service of the Council in association with Údarás na Gaeltachta and An Grianán Theatre.

1.3.4 Review of Museum Service 1986-1999

Donegal County Museum was first opened to the public in 1987. From the beginning the Museum has been a joint project of Donegal County Council and Letterkenny Urban District Council and the two authorities share the annual running costs. There are two elements to the work of the Museum Service: the operation and development of the Donegal County Museum on the High Road, Letterkenny, and the provision of a county-wide museum and heritage service.

The first *Programme for the Development of the Museum Service* was adopted in 1988 and provided a framework within which all activities in the Museum Service would take place in the future. This development programme led to the further renovation of the Museum building and the addition of an extension which was opened in 1992. Between 1988 and 1994 considerable progress was also made towards achieving the objectives set out in this programme.

The second *Development Programme* was drawn up in 1996. It outlined how the Council would develop and sustain the Museum service over the period 1996-1999. Little progress was made on the implementation of this Programme, however, due to the discovery of dry rot throughout the museum building. The subsequent renovation work was not completed until the end of 1999.

1 County Museum

In its first phase of development the Museum was housed in what was originally the warden's house of the Letterkenny Workhouse built in the 1840's. The success of the Museum in its early years encouraged both authorities to develop it further. In 1989 funding was made available to the County Council from the ERDF for the extension and renovation of the existing Museum building. Additional funding was provided by the National Lottery and from the County Council's own resources and in 1990 work began on the site. The County Museum re-opened on the 14th of June 1992.

In 1995 dry rot was discovered in the section of the Museum that was once part of the workhouse. This area of the Museum includes the first floor exhibition gallery, the workshop and the storeroom. Dry rot was present in the floors, walls, doors, windows and stairs. The first floor gallery was closed at the end of 1996. All of the artefacts were removed from the storage area to a rented warehouse. The Museum was fully closed to the public in October 1998. In 1999 a building contractor and dry rot specialist under the control of a Project Manager began the process of rectifying the problem. The work was completed at the end of 1999 at a total cost of £262,250. The Council sought grant aid for this work, but as the application was unsuccessful the work was funded 100% by Donegal County Council and Letterkenny Urban District Council.

2 Services and Resources

Exhibitions

Between 1992 and 1999 the exhibition in the first floor gallery consisted of graphic panels and artefacts depicting the history of Donegal from the Mesolithic to the Early Medieval period.

Following the renovation of the Museum in 1999 a new exhibition was designed for the first floor gallery. Funding was received from the Heritage Council to supplement the County Council's own resources enabling the purchase of new cases and graphic panels. The exhibition consists of the following:

1. The Mesolithic to the Medieval period with text, images and artefacts.
2. People, places and events from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries using graphic panels and artefacts. The subjects covered are:

- No Prejudice or Partiality - Penal Laws, Presbyterianism and Emigration
- Linen and Fish - Trade and Industry in the 18th century
- Irishmen United - The 1798 Rising
- The Great Hunger
- The Land War
- The Co-operative Movement
- The Congested Districts Board
- Migration and the Hiring Fairs
- Ulster Says No – Ulster Volunteers and the Ulster Covenant
- The Great War
- The Struggle for Freedom - The Easter Rising to the War of Independence
- The Treaty and the Civil War
- Neutral Ireland - The Emergency/World War II.

The County Museum also has a fine gallery on the ground floor in which temporary exhibitions are mounted. These exhibitions cover in more detail topics referred to in the permanent displays and subjects relating to Donegal not covered in the permanent exhibition. Other museums, historical societies etc. generate some of the temporary exhibitions and these are of general or specific public interest.

Museum Collection

To establish clear guidelines on the types of material that should be collected, the Council recently adopted a *Donegal County Museum Collection Policy* which details the principles and procedures involved in collecting artefacts for the Museum. The Policy states that the role of Donegal County Museum is to collect, record, preserve, communicate and display for the use and enjoyment of the widest community possible, the material evidence and associated information of the history of Donegal. To achieve this the Museum will develop and care for a comprehensive collection relating to the history of County Donegal in the areas of archaeology, geology, natural history, social and political history and folklife. The Museum will display and interpret the collections through the provision of attractive and authoritative galleries, exhibitions and information services. The Museum will also seek to collect items that are associated with or help to illustrate the general history of this geographical area. Since 1986 c. 7,000 artefacts have been acquired by the Museum.

Documenting and Recording

Between 1996 and 1999 the Museum received funding from the Heritage Council towards a comprehensive computerisation project. Data inputters were employed over this period to carry out the work. Information about each object in the Museum collection has been entered onto a specially designed database. This database will greatly improve all aspects of collections management by enabling staff, researchers and, eventually, the public to access information on the collections quickly and easily.

3 County-wide Museum Service

Providing a countywide service is a key role of the County Museum. Over the years this service has included:

- monitoring the welfare of archaeological and historical sites in the county in conjunction with the relevant sections of the Council and outside organisations such as Dúchas - The Heritage Service;
- advising and assisting other museums and heritage centres;
- assisting with specialist studies, publications, enquiries or queries;
- working in tandem with groups such as FÁS, Coillte, Teagasc and the IFA to promote the welfare of the County's heritage.

County-wide Heritage Initiatives

- ◆ In 1998 the Museum ran a very successful training programme, "*Running a Museum on a Shoe String Budget*", in conjunction with the Irish Museums Association. The programme ran over a 10-week period and consisted of a series of lectures on subjects such as Marketing, Management, Funding, Recording and Documentation, Exhibitions and Education. Twelve participants took part from a number of heritage centres and museums throughout the County.
- ◆ In 1994/1995 Donegal County Museum worked with a team of archaeologists from the University of Wisconsin in the US to undertake the Lough Swilly Archaeological Survey. Over 700 artefacts were found and these have been added to the Museum collection.
- ◆ In 1999 Donegal County Museum was chosen to participate in the Heritage Council's *Accreditation Pilot Study*. The pilot study set out to identify a set of minimum standards for an Irish Museum Accreditation Scheme and to test those standards by engaging six institutions representative of the full spectrum of Irish museums in defining them.
- ◆ In 1999 Donegal County Museum was designated under the *National Cultural Institutions Act 1997* and the National Monuments Acts as a place in which archaeological items of primarily local importance can be safeguarded.

Caring for Historic Monuments

Donegal County Council established a Historic Monuments Advisory Committee during 1997. The functions of the Committee are:

- To advise on all matters relating to archaeological sites and monuments in the County;
- To advise on all the archaeological aspects of development control policy and practise;
- To manage and care for graveyards in the Council's ownership;
- To advise on the development of amenity projects and to advise and assist local communications.

The Committee is expected to be re-established once the new Strategic Policy Committees are fully operational.

4 Staffing

Both Development Programmes recognised the need for well-trained professional staff in appropriate numbers if the Museum's objectives were to be successfully achieved.

The first Museum Curator was appointed in 1987. This was followed by the appointment of the Museum Assistant (Technician) in 1988 who is responsible for the maintenance of the building and the preservation of the museum collection. A Research Assistant was appointed in 1993. The Research Assistant is responsible for organising temporary exhibitions, answering all enquiries, developing an education programme and acting as assistant curator.

There have also been a number of FÁS Employment Schemes in operation in the Museum over the years. Those employed under these schemes have acted as Assistants to the Technician and as Receptionists/Typists.

The Council recognises that a quality Museum Service is one which presents friendly and expert staff, a wide range of services, comprehensive access to the collection and the information associated with it, generous opening hours, and an accessible premises. The Council has placed the emphasis on the role of staff in ensuring such a service. Staff have been funded to pursue courses in areas relevant to their particular profession, in conversational Gaelic and IT and have received training in a wide range of other subjects. A key challenge in the next phase of Museum Service development is to put in place an appropriate staffing structure.

1.3.5

Review of Archives Service 1995-1999

1 History of the archives service

There was no legislative basis in Ireland for the preservation and disposition of local archives and records until the Local Government Act 1994. Section 65 of that Act made it a responsibility of local authorities to preserve their archives and make them accessible to the public. In 1995 an archivist, employed on a short term contract by Donegal County Council, made a general list of the archives after which they were generally more accessible to the public. In 1996 the National Archives spearheaded a national survey of archives over 30 years old in every local authority in the State. The survey in Donegal included the archives of the urban district councils, Ballyshannon Town Commissioners and local hospitals, the County Council itself and all predecessor bodies of the Council. The findings for Donegal indicated that it had preserved the greatest volume of local archival material of any county council in the country but that they were located in twenty-four buildings throughout the county, mostly in poor storage conditions. The need for purpose built premises and a full-time archivist was accepted by the Council, and this led to the appointment, on a 3-year contract, in August 1999, of the current Archivist.

2 The Archives Service in November 2000

Between August 1999 and November 2000, there has been much progress in the development of Donegal's Archives Service. An Archives Steering Group has been set up to advise the Council and Senior Management on the management of local authority records and archives. A temporary repository, research room and office is in place in Three Rivers Centre, Lifford. Archives of the County Council, Grand Jury, Boards of Guardian, Rural District Councils have been listed, as well as Valuation archives. There is regulated public access to the listed archives. Records and archives in Lifford and the area offices throughout the county have been surveyed and in some cases relocated to Three Rivers for preservation and listing. A general survey of the records of every section in the Council is well under way. The Archivist is an active member of a national committee of Archivists and Freedom of Information officers set up to establish records retention schedules for series of records common to all local authorities. A number of private collections of archives relating to Donegal history and culture have been bought or been donated to the Council. There is an archives page on the Council's website, and articles on the Archives Service and the archives themselves have been published.

1.4 *Developing Cultural Services: assessing the environment*

The beginning of the 21st century is a time of profound change in local government: the changes heralded in *Better Local Government*, the introduction of a new financial management system, the reorganisation and decentralisation in County Donegal. The Library Service is dealing with the new environment ushered in by *Branching Out: a new public library service*, and the impact of new technologies particularly the internet, while the Arts Promotion service also finds itself in a new era shaped by the Arts Council's Planning Scheme offering much enhanced funding opportunities.

1.4.1 External Environment

The Council, in seeking to develop the cultural life of the County, faces a rapidly changing environment which contains both opportunities and threats. The Cultural Services can take advantages of a range of **opportunities**

- There is a growing cultural sector in the Council, and increased awareness of cultural development at County Development Board level.
- Better strategic planning is now happening in both the Council and CDB.
- Increased funding for both capital projects and everyday operations because of economic growth
- Peace process dividend for a border county
- There is goodwill towards Libraries, Arts, Museum on behalf of general public, and a recognition of what we can do to build the learning society, and for social inclusion
- Public acceptance that libraries are safe/neutral spaces
- There is growing recognition from government and national bodies – *Branching out*, the Arts Council Planning Scheme, the Accreditation Scheme for Museum and support from Heritage Council
- Developing relationships with other agencies and groups at county and local level
- The positive implications of *Better Local Government*, promising a changing local authority environment, and greater public participation
- Internet and other new technology
- The support networks at national level for librarians, arts administrators, curators, archivists.

The Cultural Services must be aware of and prepare for **threats** including

- The not so positive implications of *Better Local Government*: cultural matters do not feature strongly in current debates about local government reform, and there is a lack of clear commitment from central bodies.
- The public service staff embargo, and procedural restrictions will seriously hamper development if not addressed.
- Funding for local government is dependent on Motor Tax buoyancy.
- We are dependent on outside funding – DoE&LG, DAHG&I, Arts Council etc. – for capital development.
- There is an antipathy to public services in media and business, and culture is still seen as elitist in many quarters.
- Competition from other 'leisure' services.
- IT may create a demand we cannot satisfy.

1.4.2 Organisational Issues

Like the society it serves the Council itself is undergoing profound change. It faces the future with confidence based on the **strengths** built up in a century of service. The strengths of the Cultural Services include:

- The Human Resource:
 - ❑ The experience and expertise of staff, and the broad skills base;
 - ❑ The commitment to staff training;
 - ❑ Potential of internal linkages, and flexibility within Libraries, Arts, Museum, and Archives sector;
 - ❑ Good relationship between staff;
 - ❑ Creative approach.
- We are proactive agencies. Libraries, Arts, Museum are a good return on investment. Opening of new facilities has been well-received, making it easier for future projects
 - ❑ We provide a high quality of service with a proven track record;
 - ❑ There is an existing and growing cultural infrastructure;
 - ❑ Statutory basis for services;
 - ❑ Previous plans have led to progress.
- Cultural Committee has been a useful support.
- Cultural Services have a good image: we are the 'good news' wing of the Council.
- Decentralisation in the Council offers major opportunities.
- Non commercial outlook, and an ability to work in partnership with other groups.

The profound change which the Council is experiencing is in large part due to a recognition that it must adapt itself to the changing needs of the citizens of Donegal. There are real **weaknesses** in its structure and in local government itself, impacting on Cultural Services in the following ways:

- Insufficient staff to meet the public's expectations.
- Low morale, and its effect on staff performance.
- Need for more training – particularly specialised training.
- We have responsibility without control, due to
 - ❑ Lack of autonomy;
 - ❑ Unclear management structures;
 - ❑ Recruitment procedures;
 - ❑ Limited discretion in spending, despite recent changes;
 - ❑ Lack of capital resources;
 - ❑ Bureaucratic approach to doing business.
- We are outside the "loop" when it comes to inside info/gossip, and have a low profile within Council.
- Insufficient funding.
- The Council is seen as reactive rather than proactive.
- Strategic/forward planning has begun but benefits not yet seen.
- Re-organisation/Decentralisation/SPCs holds out promise but is causing uncertainty.
- Understanding of potential/value of service needs to be strengthened.
- Not sufficient time for planning; daily routine too pressing.
- Many staff still working in unsuitable buildings.

- Use/understanding of IT is still not enough.
- Legislation needs to be strengthened.

1.4.3 *Key Challenges*

In seeking to further develop its Cultural Services Donegal County Council faces a number of **key challenges**; how the Council faces up to these will determine how well we achieve the objectives of this plan:

- *The Human Resource*
 - ❑ Not enough staff: we need to provide adequate staffing levels;
 - ❑ We need to improve staff conditions and provide promotional opportunities;
 - ❑ We need to improve the motivation of staff;
 - ❑ We need to address the effect of time pressure on staff.

- *External Competition*
 - ❑ We are competing for leisure time with more commercial outlets: we must make cultural services more attractive;
 - ❑ We need to understand and address the impact of new developments, eg. electronic books, and the Copyright & Related Rights Act, 2000.

- *Lack of Resources*
 - ❑ We must address the staffing deficits;
 - ❑ We must improve investment in recurrent programmes;
 - ❑ We must improve investment in capital projects;
 - ❑ We must maximise the use of scarce resources; and find the resources to achieve what's possible;
 - ❑ We must address the infrastructural deficits.

- *Management Structures: Responsibility & Control*
 - ❑ We must address the 'over administration' and introduce more flexibility
 - ❑ We must improve intermediate management structures
 - ❑ We must improve vertical and interdepartmental information flows
 - ❑ We must introduce regular internal reviews and assessment.

- *Technology*
 - ❑ We must make the best possible use of the Internet, and Information and Communications Technologies generally.

- *Image and Profile*
 - ❑ We must address the relationship between Cultural services and Council generally
 - Isolation from main organisation;
 - Not seen as "Integral" part of Council;
 - General lack of knowledge/interest by Council staff in our services;
 - Not seen as a priority in Council;
 - ❑ We must address people's previous negative experience of the Council; poor image spreads to Cultural Services and colours public perception;
 - ❑ We must address the lack of interest in culture and a perceived lack of relevance;

- ❑ We must raise the profile of Cultural Services in a positive way within and without the Council.

- *Providing a Quality Service*
 - ❑ We must provide a clear vision for the development of the service;
 - ❑ We must build a service to a minimum professional standard;
 - ❑ We must aim to achieve exceptional work on a consistent basis;
 - ❑ We must make cultural services in Donegal a national leader;
 - ❑ We must provide regular external reviews and assessment, and continually check the relevance of service;
 - ❑ We must improve response times;
 - ❑ We must reach a diverse population.

- *Local Government Reform*
 - ❑ We must make the most of opportunities offered by *Better Local Government*;
 - ❑ We must ensure that re-organisation will be a good thing for Cultural Services.

2 *The Purpose of the Cultural Services*

2.1 *Why Donegal County Council invests in cultural development*

Donegal County Council seeks to enrich the lives and sense of identity of every person in the County, increase their social and cultural opportunities, and preserve their inheritance for present and future generations by maintaining and developing Library, Arts Promotion, Museum and Archives services.

In the local authority context libraries, the arts and heritage are a quality of life service, a means of enrichment through both focused and relatively unfocused activity - reading in order to find out, and reading for its own sake, attending drama or music productions, making music. The library, the arts centre, museum and archives are thus places of fulfilment and joy, for young and old.

Donegal County Council sees these services in terms of resources for the people of the county rather than buildings or institutions. The Council endorses the democratic and egalitarian assumptions and principles on which these services are based and believes that:

- ◇ County Donegal's fate in the new century, economically, socially and culturally, requires the full use of all our human resources;
- ◇ all citizens have the right of equal access to knowledge, to creative expression, and to the recorded and material heritage of their county, in order to develop their full capabilities and direct their own lives;
- ◇ democratic government at both local and national levels needs an informed and educated electorate;
- ◇ all citizens must have easy access to information and communications technologies so County Donegal may fully embrace the opportunities offered by the Information Society.

Donegal County Council intends that its Cultural Services shall meet these requirements in a manner which is efficient and practical as well as democratic, by giving the whole of the population access to the whole breadth of our culture. Even those who do not directly use the services obtain a real benefit from them, through the enrichment of the community and its individual members.

2.2 Why Donegal County Council invests in a Library and Information Service

Core Purpose

Donegal County Council seeks to meet the public's need for general education, information and recreation, to support study and the independent quest for knowledge, and to meet the public's interest in books and reading and the arts, by providing a modern library and information service. By so doing it aims to enrich the lives and increase the social and cultural opportunities of every member of society.

Supporting Objectives

To achieve this purpose Donegal County Council will ensure that each Library will be

- a Resource for Children and Young People, which will act as a Gateway to the World of Knowledge for children, and act as their access to the Information Society; which will act as a Centre for Literacy and Information Skills; and will act as a Centre for Culture for children and young people.
- a Resource for Information and Learning, which will support adult learners and education generally; which will bridge information gaps by providing accurate and up-to-date information, including business information; which will give access to the Information Society for everyone; and which will meet the citizen's right to know by providing community information.
- a Resource for Culture and the Imagination, which will support literature in Irish, and Gaelic culture generally; promote interest in literature, books and reading; which will act as the collective memory of the community and of County Donegal, by comprehensively collecting and making available local studies material of all types; and act as a focal point of the living community, for social and cultural activities.

To ensure that each community in the county has access to these resources, Donegal County Council will provide a network of modern libraries which will

- be staffed with welcoming well-trained, expert and accessible staff, in appropriate numbers and at appropriate levels;
- be housed in purpose built, conveniently located, and fully accessible modern accommodation, which will be open at times which suit the public, and equipped with state of the art facilities and equipment, and information and communications and technologies;
- be stocked with up to date and relevant collections of books, periodicals, audio-visual and multi-media stock, for adults and children;

- be linked by state of the art information and communications technologies to other libraries in the network, and to other library and information services, and cultural centres;
- be promoted and marketed to maximise use by all sections of the local community.

2.3 *Why Donegal County Council invests in the Arts*

Core Purpose

Donegal County Council, through the County Arts Service and Letterkenny Arts Centre, seeks to enrich the lives of every member of society and to ensure that the arts meet the public's need, by developing a suitable arts infrastructure, by developing a countywide service, and by working in partnership with arts, community and statutory groups and individuals.

Supporting Objectives

To achieve this purpose, Donegal County Council will ensure that the County Arts Service and Letterkenny Arts Centre will:

- develop arts audiences, support more public participation in the arts, create opportunities for children and young people to engage in the arts, and support social inclusion by providing equal access to arts activity;
- promote artistic excellence and innovation, support the work of artists, arts organisations and artists working in the Gaelic language and in traditional arts in County Donegal, bring international arts to the County and develop international audiences for Donegal artists, and arts projects, and support multi-cultural initiatives;
- foster recognition, acknowledgement, critical assessment and documentation of the arts.

To ensure that everyone in the County has access to the arts, Donegal County Council will:

- further develop the County Arts Service by developing structures for arts provision at local level, the touring arts programme, arts grants and bursaries, arts infrastructure, the public art programme and arts festivals;

- further develop Letterkenny Arts Centre by developing a new integrated arts centre building, the Arts Centre programme and the management structure.

2.4 *Why Donegal County Council invests in a Museum Service*

Core Purpose

Donegal County Council seeks to preserve the inheritance of the people of Donegal for present and future generations by collecting, recording, preserving, communicating and displaying for the use and enjoyment of the widest possible audience, the material evidence and associated information of the County's heritage. By so doing it aims to enrich the lives and sense of identity of every person in the County.

Supporting Objectives

To achieve this purpose Donegal County Council will

- provide for the further development of the Museum building to be equipped with state of the art facilities, and information and communication technologies;
- ensure that the Museum, its collections and associated information are made more accessible to the public, both general and specialist
 - by devising and implementing an education programme that will support school children and education generally;
 - by providing accurate and up to date information on the Museums' collections to the widest audience possible;
 - by ensuring that the Museum is physically and intellectually accessible to all members of the community;
- promote a wider appreciation and understanding of the unique heritage of Donegal.
 - by providing an outreach service;
 - by encouraging and supporting other museum's and heritage centres in the county;
 - by marketing the Museum throughout Donegal and nationally;
- ensure the continued preservation of the county's material heritage
 - by improving the preservation of the physical and intellectual integrity of the Museum's collections;
 - by comprehensively collecting artefacts which reflect the heritage of Donegal;

by working in conjunction with other sections of the Council and other organisation outside the Council who are involved in the preservation of material heritage;

- staff the Museum with well trained professional and accessible staff in appropriate numbers and at appropriate levels.

2.4 *Why Donegal County Council invests in an Archives Service*

Core Purpose

Donegal County Council seeks to preserve the inheritance of the people of Donegal for present and future generations by preserving, acquiring and making accessible the documented heritage of the County. By so doing it aims to enrich the lives and sense of identity of every person in the County.

Supporting Objectives

To achieve this purpose Donegal County Council will

- provide purpose designed, secure accommodation to house all of the archives in the Council's care;
- make proper arrangements for the management, custody, care and conservation of the records and archives of Donegal county, and implement a proactive acquisition policy for private archives collections which are important for the study and understanding of the county;
- facilitate access to the county's archives by the public, provide research facilities of the highest standard, and so maximise the use of archives for social, political, historical, economic and cultural research;
- create and develop awareness of the importance and relevance of archives for our national and local heritage, and generate a greater demand for access from within the wider community;
- establish an efficient records management programme which will track the life cycle of all records in the Council's care, from creation to disposal or permanent preservation in the County Archives;
- staff the Archives Service with well trained professional staff in appropriate numbers and at appropriate levels.

2.6 A Quality Service

Donegal County Council seeks to improve the quality of service provided to the public in Libraries, the Arts, Museum and Archives, and to achieve and demonstrate value for money, high standards of service, efficiency, courtesy and accountability. By so doing it aims to enrich the lives of every person in the County.

To achieve this purpose Donegal County Council will

- develop a deeper understanding of the needs of individuals and communities for Cultural Services, and cultural development, and put in place procedures to respond quickly to these needs;
- develop a deeper understanding of the diverse and changing nature of society in the county, and ensure that services evolve to match diversity and change;
- ensure that the resources of the Library, Arts, Museum and Archives services are, in as far as practicable, available at times which suit the public;
- seek to develop Cultural Services in Donegal to recognised professional standards;
- seek to make Cultural Services in Donegal a national leader by consistently meeting the highest standards of provision;
- ensure that there are appropriate evaluation mechanisms in place, including surveys and complaints procedures, to assess the value and impact of the Library, Arts, Museum and Archives services, and the degree to which they achieve their stated objectives.

2.7 Culture for All: Social Inclusion

Donegal County Council seeks to make County Donegal a more just and inclusive society by increasing social cohesion and solidarity, and by investing in cultural and informational programmes which are open to everyone. By so doing it aims to increase the social and cultural opportunities of every person in the County.

Donegal County Council recognises that social inclusion policies must provide for a wide range of goals, including equitable access to information and cultural activities. Social inclusion must cover more than the world of work, both because a healthy society should follow other priorities besides the work ethic, and because at any given time many people are outside the world of work.

To achieve this purpose Donegal County Council will

- ensure that the provision of Cultural Services shall evolve in a way designed to reduce social and geographical exclusion and inequality, and to enable more citizens to take an active part in society;
- ensure that all buildings maintained by the Library, Arts, Museum and Archives services will be accessible to all members of the community;
- ensure that the opportunities offered by the Information Society of increasing wealth and greater availability of information within society generally are offered to all, and that the threat of a dramatically widened information gap, resulting in growing social exclusion, is countered;
- ensure that its Cultural Services, and in particular the Library, will seek to
 - secure access to all published information, irrespective of physical formats;
 - offer adult lifelong learning and training opportunities;
 - enable all citizens to cope with ICT, and give public access to hardware and software;
- support cultural identity and cultural activities in rapidly changing societies.

3 Action Plan for Cultural Services 2001-2004

3.1

Introduction

This Action Plan builds on what has been achieved by the Council since the mid 1980s, and pays special attention to the following issues:

- Improving the quality and delivery of services;
- Developing services and service points in all parts of the County;
- Putting an appropriate staffing structure in place;
- Addressing social inclusion; and
- Providing a better service to smaller communities, including islands.

This Action Plan is part of a continuous rolling strategic approach to cultural development in County Donegal, and is not a stand-alone plan. It sets out the actions the Council intends to take in the period 2001-2004, while keeping the longer-term goals clearly in mind.

This Action Plan recognises the central importance of human resources in achieving the ambitious objectives described in the following pages. This Plan was prepared in the context of local government reform. For the objectives to be achieved Cultural Services must make the most of the opportunities offered by reform, and increase substantially their profile within local government and in the community generally.

In this Action Plan, the strategies for achieving the Council's goals, e.g. "Making the Library a Resource for Children and Young People" are set out followed by individual actions which identify what is to be done, when it is to be done, and who is expected to do it.

Note

The Council recognises the key importance of ensuring that children and young people have access to the cultural inheritance of County Donegal, and have the chance of participating in the cultural life of their communities. The Council recognises that school libraries are vital to the holistic development of children, that the arts and creative expression are vital elements in the education process, and that there is growing awareness of the importance for schoolchildren of the history of their locality. The Council will, during the life of this Action Plan, advocate the need for educational authorities to fulfil their obligations in this area. In the meantime the Council will continue to discharge its responsibilities to all the children of Donegal.

3.2 *Action Plan for the Library Service 2001-2004*

"A Library for Each – A Library for All"

In the period to the end of 2004 Donegal County Council will further develop the Library Service by enhancing the range and quality of services, and by extending the network to Bundoran, Donegal Town, Ballybofey / Stranorlar (and if possible to other towns), supported by a purpose designed Administrative Centre.

3.2.1 *Making the Library a Resource for Children and Young People*

Donegal County Council intends that the Library will be a Resource for Children and Young People. In practice this will mean that the Council will

- develop *Wainfest* (including Children's Book Festival) as the focus of provision for children and young people;
- put in place programmes to promote reading and the development of reading skills;
- develop and implement an Information Technology Access Policy for children;
- develop special programmes designed to appeal to teenagers;
- ensure that it provides a comprehensive and up-to-date stock for children and young people, in line with international guidelines; stock which satisfies young people's overall need for information as well as their emotional, social, educational and cultural needs;
- expand the library service to schools and school librarians;
- develop structured links with primary and secondary schools and youth organisations.

Action 1: Enhance services to Children and Young People

The **Central Library** has been a resource for children and young people since it opened in 1995. Staff in Central Library will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- continue to play a pivotal role in the organisation of *Wainfest* and support its development on a county-wide basis;
- continue to develop the "Reading Tree" and "Readers & Writers" programmes and initiate other reading schemes, e.g. book discussion groups and themed book promotions;
- profile teenagers in order to ascertain how best library stock and services can reflect their interests, put in place a programme of activities, e.g. book discussion groups, reflecting the results of the profile, and ensure that services for teenagers are presented in a more innovative and attractive way;
- develop internet and ITC services (including CD-ROMs etc.);
- put in place programmes designed to stimulate the emotional and imaginative development of children, including an expanded programme of storytelling, drama, exhibitions and creative writing workshops;

- play an active role in ensuring that all children in the community have access to materials designed to enhance their literacy skills, and work closely with schools and parents/guardians in order to ensure that children gain the maximum benefit from library resources.

Services to Children and Young People in **Buncrana Community Library** began when the facility opened in late 1999, and services are thus at an early stage of development. Staff in Buncrana will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- develop its *Wainfest* programme begun in 2000;
- hold short story and poetry competitions and initiate other reading schemes such as a "Reading Tree" and "Readers & Writers";
- initiate Mother / Father and Toddler reading sessions;
- profile teenagers to ensure that teen-oriented books, magazines and audio-visual materials are available to teenagers and young people;
- initiate planning to organise and implement a Homework Club;
- develop internet and ICT services (including CD-ROMs etc.);
- continue to organise class visits from primary and secondary schools to coincide with activities in the library such as author visits and exhibitions.
- contact secondary schools with a view to organising lectures and talks by authors and poets on Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula.

Services are provided to Children and Young People in **Lifford Community Library, Ramelton Community Library, and Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann**. In these service points, staff will, from early in this Action Plan

- organise events as part of *Wainfest*;
- hold short story and poetry competitions and initiate other reading schemes such as a "Reading Tree";
- initiate Mother and Toddler reading sessions;
- develop internet and ICT services (including CD-ROMs etc.);

It is expected that **Milford Community Library** and **Carndonagh Community Library** will come onstream at the beginning of this Action Plan, and that **Bundoran Community Library, Donegal Town Community Library** and **Ballybofey /Stranorlar Community Library** will be developed during this Plan. Staff in these libraries will, when they come onstream, develop their Library as a resource for children and young people along the lines of existing developed Libraries, with services in Donegal Town at the same level as those of Buncrana.

The **Administrative Centre** will support the work of all of the above named service points, and of the branch libraries awaiting development. In particular staff will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- plan and implement a co-ordinated approach to children's services county-wide. Staff will be instrumental in developing policies and ideas relating to all areas of children's services, both in response to suggestions from staff dealing directly with children on a day-to-day basis and in the context of new services being adopted by the Council;

- devise an Information Technology Access Policy for children in conjunction with teachers, parents, and Council Library and IT staff. This policy will be in line with nationally accepted guidelines and will ensure that children gain the maximum benefits from ICT in a safe environment;
- continue to ensure that some 30% of total bookfund expenditure will be on books and other materials for children and young people;
- put in place stock management procedures, as set out in "Developing our Collections" to ensure that there will be timely delivery of stock to Libraries in the provision of material for specific reading schemes for junior and adult library users as well as in updating the regular stock. Administrative Centre staff will aim to have stock shelf-ready at least three weeks before these schemes commence;
- extend and update stock in the junior section of all libraries, regardless of their size, with stock exchanged at least every six months, and if possible every quarter. Stock will be exchanged on a regular basis on the Mobile Library, which carries a selection of junior material, in particular picturebooks for the pre-school age group, and fiction for children of primary school age;
- provide graded readers and book/cassette packs to encourage reluctant readers, as part of the core stock in all libraries. At present these materials are provided only on request in branch libraries, or through the School Library Service.

Action 2: Develop services to Schools

School library services at primary and post-primary level are generally at a low level of development in the Republic of Ireland. The responsibility for school library services lies chiefly with the Department of Education & Science. The Council hopes that there will be a much greater commitment to school library services by the Department in the period of this Action Plan.

- The Council will develop the School Library Service in order that all primary schools may avail of its stock and professional support. This may involve a direct service to schools;
- Staff in Central Library and Buncrana Community Library will contact all local primary, secondary and special schools, with a view to establishing regular class visits. Regular communication between teachers and library staff will ensure that the library stock and services fully support curricular and extracurricular activities;
- Administrative Centre staff will contact all primary, secondary and special schools (excluding those in the immediate vicinity of Central Library and Buncrana Community Library) with a view to establishing class visits or individual visits to local libraries, in particular to libraries with Internet access. Visits will mirror those found to be successful in Central and Buncrana;
- Administrative Centre staff will provide support and advice to school librarians and other school library staff, in particular those who are not professional librarians.

3.2.2 *Making the Library a Resource for Learning and Information*

Donegal County Council intends that the Library will be a Resource for Learning and Information. In practice this will mean that the Council will

- implement an Information Technology Access Programme, which caters for the whole community as part of a co-ordinated approach to information and communications technologies [ICT] for the Library network;
- provide a comprehensive and up-to-date Business Information Service;
- provide comprehensive Community and Health Information;
- provide information on public bodies, and provide for the information needs of the local authority;
- implement a programme of support for lifelong learning, adult education and distance education, involving visits for adult groups to the library and block loans etc., and co-operation with other groups active in the area of adult education;
- work actively to assist in literacy provision;
- ensure that Libraries provide the means of access to information for the whole community, using all media whether in printed or electronic form;
- make use of user profiles to ensure that the stock in each Library is appropriate to the learning and information needs of the community.

Action 3: Information Society Donegal: Develop Internet and ICT Access

Staff in all developed Libraries will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- provide access for all members of the community to the internet, in keeping with national policies on social inclusion and participation in the Information Society, and in keeping with the Council's own policies;
- implement a policy which ensures that everyone in the community has free access to Information Technology in a safe environment. The Central Library will establish electronic links with other information providers in order to ensure that all citizens have speedy access to up-to-date and comprehensive information.

Action 4: Information Society Donegal: Web Development Strategy

The Council will

- prepare a Web Development Strategy in 2001, which will provide for making the Library OPAC and content available through the web, and delivering added value services to remote users [see Actions 8, 49 & 62];
- work with the system suppliers to provide web OPAC, EDI and other improvements to the system;

- play a full part in national initiatives to digitize library materials, and if required initiate its own digitization programme;

Action 5: Information Society Donegal: Develop Information Services

The **Central Library** has been a resource for learning and information since it opened in 1995. Staff in Central Library will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- provide an up-to-date and comprehensive Reference and Information Service, establishing a network with other information providers so that the information needs of the community can best be met;
- provide information in co-operation with other agencies to support business and economic development in Donegal, utilising the library network to deliver business information on a countywide basis. As a priority Central Library staff will devise a strategy to promote 'Start Your Own Business' information;
- deliver a much enhanced Community Information service, including information on taxation, social welfare entitlements etc.; in co-operation with organizations such as Community Information Centres and MABS, the Library will ensure that all citizens have easy access to such information;
- ensure that its Health Information stock is up-to-date and comprehensive, and explore the possibility of co-operating with the North-Western Health Board to deliver more specialised medical information;
- provide information on local authority, central government, and other public bodies, ensuring that its extensive stock of Official Publications is easily accessible on a countywide basis.

Staff in other developed Libraries, and in particular **Buncrana Community Library** will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- continue to develop up-to-date Reference stock, business information and community information files, and information on local authorities and government;
- compile directories of all community groups in Inis Eoghain, and the Rosses;
- hold information days for community groups.
- The **Administrative Centre** will support the work of all of the developed Libraries, and of the branch libraries awaiting development. In particular staff will, from the beginning of this Action Plan
- plan and implement a co-ordinated approach to Reference and Information services county-wide, to ensure that each library will have a collection capable of meeting the needs of its particular community; staff will develop an awareness of resources held by other information providers in order to extend the resources available to a local enquirer;
- plan and implement a co-ordinated approach to serving local authority staff county-wide. Central Library will hold the main Reference and Information collections within the library network and will provide support to each service point. To a lesser extent other libraries, in particular those

attached to Area Offices i.e. Milford, Carndonagh and Ballybofey, will also hold information, and these will be developed using the experience of Central Library staff regarding detailed reference requirements.

Action 6: Improve Services for Lifelong Learning and Literacy

Staff in **Central Library** will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- provide support to those engaged in lifelong learning and distance education; staff will co-operate with other agencies involved in adult education and develop links with independent learners;
- provide resources to assist literacy students and their tutors; in co-operation with other agencies in this area staff will draw up an annual programme which will ensure that literacy students and their tutors receive maximum benefit from library resources.

Staff in other developed Libraries, and in particular **Buncrana Community Library**, will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- put in place measures to support adults and groups undertaking distance education courses, and ensure they have access to up-to-date and relevant books and electronic research materials;
- liaise with adult literacy groups in their communities to facilitate their development and provide them with block loans of relevant materials;

The **Administrative Centre** will support the work of all of the developed Libraries, and of the branch libraries awaiting development. In particular staff will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- plan and implement a co-ordinated approach to Open Learning and Continuing Education services county-wide and support the initiatives outlined in *Learning for life: White paper on Adult Education*. Library staff will continue to play a key role on the Adult Education Board of the VEC and develop contacts with other bodies involved in educational planning. By being involved at this early stage collection development will reflect educational trends. All Libraries will provide support to students following formal or informal courses, as well as independent learners, by making available study places and facilitating full use of the opportunities afforded by ICT, as well as the more traditional media. In consultation with course providers and literacy tutors the Library will purchase multiple copies of books and other materials to support students in all parts of the county. Block loans will be given to course tutors where appropriate. Library staff will adapt to changing circumstances, for example a large number of people suddenly becoming unemployed, and will provide support in the areas of job seeking, retraining and so on.

3.2.3 *Making the Library a Resource for*

Culture and the Imagination

Donegal County Council intends that the Library will be a Resource for Culture and the Imagination. In practice this will mean that the Council will

- foster a culture in which reading and creative writing can flourish, e.g. "Readers & Writers" programme, *Wainfest*, and support writers groups, visits and workshops by writers, etc.
- review the "Developing our Collections" policy adopted in 1997, and implement as amended;
- aim to provide "The right book for the right person at the right time", and make use of surveys and user profiles to ensure that fiction and popular non-fiction for lending contribute to the quality of life for the community;
- develop Local Studies Services by: ensuring collections meet set levels of provision; organising a programme of lectures and exhibitions on topics of local interest; devising a preservation policy for rare and valuable items in the collection; enhancing the range of finding aids and electronic media to fully exploit the collection; devising a policy on genealogical services;
- develop services through the medium of Gaelic / Services to the Gaelic-speaking communities;
- make materials available in a wide range of languages to speakers of other languages as appropriate to the needs of the community;
- constantly review the arrangement of stock, and highlight areas that might previously have been overlooked.

Action 7: Develop Lending Services

The **Central Library** has been a resource for culture and the imagination since it opened in 1995. Staff in Central Library will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- ensure, through the use of user profiles and other means, that its stock of lending fiction and nonfiction contributes to the quality of life of those in the community;
- ensure that its stock of talking books, CDs and videos meet the changing needs of the community;
- constantly review its stock selection methods, shelving arrangements, displays etc.;
- act as the main focus for initiatives such as the "Readers & Writers" programme, and support existing and emerging writers' groups.

Staff in other developed Libraries, and in particular **Buncrana Community Library** will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- provide an up-to-date, attractive stock of fiction and nonfiction materials as well as talking books, CDs and videos to meet the needs of the community;
- initiate programmes to raise awareness of the benefits and pleasures of reading and literature for adults and children, e.g. the "Readers & Writers" programme and *Wainfest*;

- organise series of lectures and talks on a varied range of subjects such as health, unemployment and local history.

The **Administrative Centre** will support the work of all of the developed Libraries, and of the branch libraries awaiting development. In particular staff will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- plan and implement a co-ordinated approach to Lending Services county-wide;
- ensure collections of fiction and popular nonfiction meet set levels of provision and ensure that all of the stock of Donegal County Library is available to all library users regardless of their location;
- encourage suggestions for specific interests or requirements not included in existing stock;
- ensure stock is exchanged at least every six months, and ideally every quarter. A core stock will be built up in each branch library to ensure the most asked for topics such as certain aspects of health, parenting etc. are always available.

Action 8: Develop Donegal Local Studies

The **Central Library** is the main resource for the study of the history, economy and culture of County Donegal. Staff in Central Library will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- put in place a strategy to promote the Local Studies collection, involving an exhibition programme, a lecture series and visits by local history groups;
- develop its extensive range of finding aids;
- continue the cataloguing and indexing of Local Studies books, journals, newspapers, pamphlets and ephemera to the highest standard;
- make unique Local Studies content available via the OPAC and the web as part of a Web Development Strategy [see Actions 4, 49 & 62];
- commission the microfilming of newspaper and other vulnerable materials;
- ensure that children have easy access to the Local Studies collection, in view of the increasing importance of local history on the school curriculum.

Buncrana Community Library is the main Local Studies resource for Inishowen; staff will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- continue to develop Local History files and promote the use of finding aids in both printed and electronic form;
- initiate exhibitions to coincide with the Macklin and McGlinchey Schools;
- set up a Local History Club.

The **Administrative Centre** will support the work of all of the developed Libraries, and of the branch libraries awaiting development. In particular staff will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- plan and implement a co-ordinated approach to Donegal Local Studies county-wide, in response to the huge increase in the level of interest in local studies; staff will make every effort to extend this interest to the whole community;
- organise a programme of lectures and exhibitions on topics of local interest in conjunction with library staff countywide, in particular the specialist staff based in Central Library. The schedule of exhibitions will include those generated in-house as well as those on loan from other organisations. Certain exhibitions created in Donegal will be loaned to other libraries or organisations as appropriate;
- work with staff of the Central Library, County Museum, County Archives and specialist conservators to devise a policy for the preservation of rare and valuable items, and to maximise their collective resources and make them as accessible as possible;
- assist Libraries to build up a collection of files on subjects of interest to students to support and build on their schoolwork in response to the local history focus in the Primary School curriculum;
- develop links to local history societies both in Donegal and in other areas connected to the county, and facilitate the development of a network of such groups;
- Support the genealogical sources housed at the Central Library, and ensure that the main library for each area will hold additional copies of the most asked for items such as the Censuses of 1901 and 1911, newspapers on microfilm etc.;
- continuously update the Library website content, to reflect county-wide collections; make relevant sources available on the internet in response to the increasing number of enquiries received by email and from overseas.

Action 9: Seirbhisí fríd an Ghaeilge / do phobail na Gaeilge a fhorbairt

The Council will ensure that staff are competent in the Gaelic language in order that all library services can be made available in Gaelic or in English. All developed Libraries, and in particular **Leabharlann Ghaoth Dobhair, Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann, Central Library** and **Buncrana Community Library** will

- ensure that all signage and relevant promotional materials are available in Gaelic or in bi-lingual form;
- develop their Gaelic language collections: Central Library has a large stock of books in Gaelic and it will continue to devise methods to encourage their use, including book displays, author visits and exhibitions; Buncrana Community Library will liaise with the local Gaelscoil and groups organising Gaelic language courses to encourage parents, children and teachers to make use of the Gaelic section of the library;
- make special efforts to promote reading in Gaelic by younger children: picturebooks for children in Gaelic are already well used and staff will forge links with Gaelscoileanna and other organisations in order to further promote their use.

The **Administrative Centre** will support the work of all of the developed Libraries, and of the branch libraries awaiting development. In particular staff will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- ensure that Gaelic language collections countywide meet set levels of provision, and in particular that Libraries in Gaeltacht areas hold extensive collections of books, journals and newspapers and audiovisual material;
- ensure that all Libraries hold dual-language materials, in Gaelic / English, as well as Gaelic / other languages, and Gaelic language learning packs for children and adults;
- liaise with Gaelic language organisations, Gaelscoileanna teachers, teachers of the Gaelic language and other relevant groups / individuals in order to provide the most comprehensive and relevant service.

Action 10: Provide services to speakers of other languages

All developed Libraries will, in recognition of the Ulster Scots heritage of East Donegal, and the growing multi-cultural nature of the county

- provide books and other materials about Ulster Scots language and culture, including texts in Ulster Scots, and trilingual signage, where appropriate;
- provide material in a variety of languages to meet the needs of people living in their communities, in particular children's books, so that people living in Donegal and their children need not lose contact with their mother tongue. The Central Library will hold a large collection of foreign language dictionaries and phrasebooks, and community libraries will each have a collection relevant to their specific needs;
- provide books about the countries of origin, so that the local community may form a better understanding of their neighbours' country and culture;
- exploit ICT, in particular the Internet, to allow newspapers worldwide to be accessed from the local library;
- liaise with relevant interests to keep abreast of the growing community of speakers of other languages.

3.2.4 *Developing Library Infrastructure: Projects in Approval Process*

The Department of the Environment & Local Government provides 75% funding for construction and fitting out of new library projects, and 50% funding for stock and equipment. Three projects are currently awaiting Approval in Principle from the Department, all of them of major significance. Bundoran and Donegal Town are important because of the need to extend the modern library network to the south of the County; the Administrative Centre, because of the need for such a purpose-built facility to provide the support to service points which is so lacking at present. In addition the Council plans to include Ballybofey / Stranorlar in the Stranorlar Area Office.

Action 11: Build Bundoran Community Library

The original application for approval to provide a Library in Bundoran was submitted in August 1988, and a revised application was submitted in November 2000. The Council will begin construction of Bundoran Community Library in 2001, and complete the project in 2002, provided funding is secured from the Department. It is proposed that Bundoran Community Library will be built as part of the Bundoran Civic Offices project.

Facilities

Bundoran Community Library will have an area of 260 sq. m. not including concourse, toilets and other areas shared with Bundoran UDC, and will house facilities for adult lending, children's lending and activities, and reference and information. The Library will have:

- ✓ an adult lending stock of some 6,000 volumes;
- ✓ children's lending stock of some 7,500 volumes;
- ✓ provision for public access to the internet – as well as forming part of the Library IT network for cataloguing, circulation etc.;
- ✓ a community information collection;
- ✓ newspapers and periodicals;
- ✓ a reference collection of some 750 volumes;
- ✓ audio and video listening/viewing and lending; and
- ✓ provision for exhibitions and other community activities.

Estimated Costs

	<i>Total Cost</i>	<i>DCC Element</i>
□ Construction incl. Fees	£306,000	£76,500 (25%)
□ Fitting Out	£31,000	£7,700 (25%)
□ Equipment	£20,000	£10,000 (50%)
□ Stock	£160,000	£80,000 (50%)
□ Total	£517,000	
□ Donegal County Council Matching Funding		£174,250.

Action 12: Build Donegal Town Community Library

The original application for approval to provide a Library in Donegal Town was submitted in August 1994. Donegal Town Community Library will be the main library for South Donegal, and the Council is considering a number of possible locations at present. Provided funding is secured from the Department the Council will begin construction in 2001/2 and complete it in 2003.

Facilities

Donegal Town Community Library will have an area of 420 sq. m., and will house facilities for reference and information, adult lending, and children's lending and activities. The Library will have:

- ✓ a reference collection of some 1,000 volumes;
- ✓ a research collection (including Donegal and Irish interest material) of some 3,000 volumes;
- ✓ an adult lending stock of some 9,000 volumes;
- ✓ children's lending stock of some 12,000 volumes;
- ✓ provision for public access to the internet – as well as forming part of the Library IT network for cataloguing, circulation etc.;
- ✓ a community information collection;
- ✓ newspapers and periodicals;
- ✓ audio and video listening/viewing and lending; and
- ✓ provision for exhibitions and other community activities.

Estimated Costs

	<i>Total Cost</i>	<i>DCC Element</i>
□ Construction incl. Fees	£540,000	£135,000 (25%)
□ Fitting Out	£49,000	£12,250 (25%)
□ Equipment	£30,000	£15,000 (50%)
□ Stock	£240,000	£120,000 (50%)
□ Total	£859,000	
□ Donegal County Council Matching Funding		£282,250.

Action 13: Build County Library Administrative Centre

The original application for approval to provide the County Library Administrative Centre was submitted in January 1994. The Council is currently considering a number of possible locations, in particular a site in Council ownership adjoining the County Museum, and, if funding is secured, will begin construction in 2002.

Facilities

The County Library Administrative Centre will have an area of 600 sq m, and house the administrative and distributive functions of the Library Service. It will have

- ✓ offices for County Librarian and senior staff; offices and workstations for acquisitions, cataloguing and technical processing; workstations for schools and mobile services; offices for Arts Promotion and other staff;
- ✓ meeting / training facilities;
- ✓ book stack of approx. 250 sq m;
- ✓ loading bay / sorting area;
- ✓ kitchen and other staff facilities.

Estimated Costs

	<i>Total Cost</i>	<i>DCC Element</i>
□ Construction incl. Fees	£750,000	£187,500 (25%)
□ Fitting Out	£65,000	£16,250 (25%)
□ Total	£815,000	
□ Donegal County Council Matching Funding		£203,750.

Action 14: Build Ballybofey / Stranorlar Community Library

The Council has informed the Department that it intends to include Ballybofey / Stranorlar Community Library as an integral part of the Stranorlar Area Office. The Council will, in partnership with the North Western Health Board and other agencies, begin construction of this complex in 2002.

Facilities

Ballybofey / Stranorlar Community Library will have an area of 280 sq. m. not including concourse, toilets and other areas shared with the Stranorlar Area Office, and will house facilities for adult lending, children's lending and activities, and reference and information. The Library will have:

- ✓ an adult lending stock of some 7,000 volumes;
- ✓ children's lending stock of some 9,000 volumes;
- ✓ provision for public access to the internet – as well as forming part of the Library IT network for cataloguing, circulation etc.;
- ✓ a community information collection;
- ✓ newspapers and periodicals;
- ✓ a reference collection of some 950 volumes;
- ✓ audio and video listening/viewing and lending; and
- ✓ provision for exhibitions and other community activities.

Estimated Costs

	<i>Total Cost</i>	<i>DCC Element</i>
□ Construction incl. Fees	£390,000	£97,500 (25%)
□ Fitting Out	£35,000	£8,750 (25%)
□ Equipment	£26,000	£13,000 (50%)
□ Stock	£180,000	£90,000 (50%)
□ Total	£631,000	
□ Donegal County Council Matching Funding		£209,250.

Action 15: Purchase replacement Library Delivery Van

The Council will purchase a replacement Library Delivery Van in 2001. The current Van was purchased in 1990, and is now due for replacement. This project will be eligible for 100% funding from the Department.

3.2.5

Developing Library Infrastructure: Completing the Library Network

If and when the projects listed above are built, it would mean that 10 out of the 17 towns in the County with a catchment population above the Department's threshold would have a modern library. In addition these libraries would be backed up by a purpose designed Administrative Centre.

While this would represent a huge advance in the cultural and social infrastructure of the county, 7 towns would still require a modern library. Of these towns, Ballyshannon will require a somewhat larger facility because of its population. A proposal has emerged in the Culture Sectoral Working Group of the County Development Board that a library should be provided in Gaoth Dobhair as part of a larger cultural facility, in partnership with Údarás and community bodies, given that this area is the most populous urban or semi-urbanised Gaeltacht area in the country. The remaining 5 towns would require small or medium sized libraries.

In completing the network the following would form the next tranche of priority projects, as recommended by the Cultural Committee:

1. Ballyshannon Community Library;
2. Leabharlann Phobail Chloich Cheann Fhaola;
3. Killybegs Community Library;
4. Glenties Community Library.

The Council formed partnerships with local community development groups to provide both Ramelton Community Library and Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann; this model could be used in these projects, and in the remaining towns, provided suitable premises or locations can be identified.

The provision of Leabharlann Phobail Ghaoth Dobhair will depend on the proposal outlined above coming to fruition. The remaining projects would be Moville Community Library and Raphoe Community Library; the Branch Libraries in these 2 towns, although small, are currently being refurbished.

3.2.6 *Serving Smaller Communities*

Action 16: Implement New Ways to Serve Smaller Communities

The Council will, early in the life of this Action Plan, develop library provision strategies specially tailored to rural, coastal, and island communities, which will integrate library services as part of a package to sustain and enhance rural life, promote participation by communities in the wider society, and contribute to genuine self-sustaining development. In particular Library staff and staff in the Area Offices will

- work with local community groups to include a library and information element in a community-run facility, involving other cultural, heritage, or information elements; this will enable a library presence in villages, areas

of dispersed population, and especially islands too small to sustain a stand-alone library;

- investigate the potential for serving isolated communities in a structured partnership with other state, regional and local agencies; e.g. the potential of combining a mobile / housebound service with a local transport or postbus service, or the potential of working with An Post, educational and health agencies, and initiatives like LEADER, to develop an integrated approach, with a library service at its core;
- use information and communications technologies to the full in serving communities outside of the catchment of towns with libraries, and especially isolated and island communities. This would involve internet access to the Library's database, by individual householders or via a community-run facility, and a web-based ordering system.

Action 17: Develop a Strategy for Mobile Library Services

While most communities would prefer to be served by a fixed library service point, one which they can feel ownership of, the Council recognises the role that mobile libraries can play in providing access to library and information services. Mobile libraries can be used effectively as an alternative to a small library to serve scattered and / or isolated communities. The Council will develop the potential of mobile libraries to be a link between isolated communities and the authority's range of services, in particular information services and arts promotion, and will make innovative use of ICT on the mobile library to enhance such a link. The Council's intention is to complete the Library network before commissioning additional Mobile Library vehicles, but the Council will, before the end of 2004, prepare a long-term strategy for mobile library services.

3.2.7 Developing ICT and Support Services

Action 18: Extend Library IT Network and Enhance its Functionality

The Genesis Library IT Network presently covers the Central Library, Buncrana Community Library, Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann and the Administrative Centre, with comms links in place and hardware and software purchased for Milford Community Library and Carndonagh Community Library. The Department of the Environment & Local Government has recently announced additional funding for ICT, and the Council will use this funding to implement its ICT strategies.

The Council will

- extend the Library IT Network to new service points developed during this Action Plan, and, beginning in 2001, to Lifford Community Library, Ramelton Community Library, the Mobile Library, and other sites
- seek to develop an interface to link Genesis with Agresso, the Council's Financial Management System;
- make more effective use of the Management Information System [MIS] capabilities of Genesis.

Action 19: Improve Acquisitions, Cataloguing and Technical Processes [ACT]

The Council will

- use ICT to streamline those services not 'seen' by the public, most notably in the areas of acquisitions / stock ordering, cataloguing, periodicals control, and inter-library loans;
- source additional services from specialist library suppliers, to reduce the time spent processing at the Administrative Centre, and ensure that users receive new stock, and in particular requests and inter-library loans, with the minimum of delay.

Action 20: Improve Stock Management Techniques

The Council will, through the staff of the Administrative Centre, more fully implement the stock management procedures set out in "Developing our Collections", adopted in 1997. In particular staff will, beginning in 2001

- review stock criteria for all developed Libraries, and ensure that agreed criteria are met through stock audits and other means;
- improve ordering and delivery of requests and inter library loans;
- assist in the improvement of stock arrangement and display techniques;
- implement regular stock rotation and disposal routines.

3.2.8 *Enhancing Access and Participation*

Action 21: Implement Access Strategy

Donegal County Council has committed itself to removing physical, social and financial barriers to library use. In 1999 the Council initiated broad-ranging consultation with representatives from NCBI, NRB, VEC and community organisations, and in 2000 adopted and published "An Access Strategy for the Library Service".

The Council will, during the course of this Action Plan implement all recommendations made in the Strategy and continue the partnership with state and voluntary agencies to ensure every effort is made to remove real or perceived barriers. In particular the Council will

- work with other agencies to eliminate physical barriers for people with a physical, sensory, learning, mental health or emotional impairment;
- make maximum use of information and communications technologies to enable and encourage use of library resources by people with disabilities;
- place libraries at the heart of community life by simplifying procedures, reaching out to communities and in particular non-users;
- build on the removal of issue charges in 2000 and analyse whether remaining charges act as an obstacle to use.

The Council will seek to provide a service to the housebound as well as to day centres for older people and centres for people with special needs, in the most effective way. The Council will consider options including a postal service for talking books, and extending the Mobile Library service to allow more numerous as well as longer stops.

Action 22: Improve Opening Hours

The Council will, also as part of the implementation of the "Access Strategy"

- gather the views of users and nonusers regarding when they would wish their library to be open;
- liaise with staff and their representatives with regard to enhancing the opening hours in line with the public's needs;
- ensure that opening hours suit the needs and lifestyles of the communities being served.

Action 23: Prepare Marketing Plan

The Council will ensure a systematic approach to marketing by devising a marketing strategy, with promotional, public relations and outreach elements.

The strategy will lead to a marketing plan based on an analysis of

- the resources and facilities needed and wanted by the public;
- the target audience(s) / potential usership;
- the most appropriate promotional activities;
- how these may be provided at an appropriate cost.

Action 24: Enhance Promotion and Outreach Programme

The Council will, beginning in 2001, significantly enhance the Library promotion programme along the lines of the "Promotion and Outreach" policy adopted in 1996. In particular it will

- ensure a high standard of publicity material at all times;
- make maximum use of all media to promote library events;
- continue to expand its range of information leaflets as new service points and services come on stream;

- continue to promote and develop the festivals of *Wainfest* and *Bealtaine* by expanding the programme and adding new service points, and use these festivals as a focus for promoting the entire service;
- increase outreach activities in all developed Libraries.

Action 25: Implement measures to increase participation by the community

The Council will continue to implement the "Participation" policy, adopted in 1996. In particular the Council will, beginning in 2001

- begin a programme of continuing research on users and nonusers;
- set new targets for membership, usership, and borrowing in all developed Libraries;
- put in place mechanisms to meet targets;
- put in place a strategy to engage with non-users of Libraries.

3.3 Action Plan for the Arts 2001-2004

3.3 A Arts Promotion County-wide

The consultation process for this Action Plan has indicated a need for the Council's arts development programme to operate on a more equitable basis throughout the whole county. Over the past number of years significant improvements in arts infrastructure and support services have taken place in Letterkenny, but gaps in service provision and a weaker infrastructural base exist in Inishowen, East Donegal and South Donegal. It will be a clear priority of the Council to address this issue over the course of the Action Plan.

In response to other issues arising from the consultation process, the Council will develop new initiatives in the areas of visual arts promotion and

marketing, the development of professional theatre in the county, infrastructural and touring arts provision, community arts training and artists residency programmes, marketing and audience development, youth arts in rural areas as well as the formulation of a number of initiatives designed to ensure the continuation of the marching band tradition in the county.

3.3.1 Developing the Arts County-wide

Action 26: Develop Arts Promotion Structures at Local Level

The Council will put in place, beginning in 2001, an improved Arts Promotion service with additional arts development personnel based in key Area Offices, dedicated to the provision and dissemination of information on funding, training, employment and creative multi-media opportunities as well as pooled administrative, marketing and promotional resources.

The new arts development personnel will also take responsibility for the local management of Donegal County Council arts programmes and will seek to integrate the arts programme with other locally delivered Council services and activities eg. village and town renewal schemes, social housing schemes, educational and environmental projects etc.

Building on the very strong links already forged, the Council will develop its role with regard to arts development in the Gaeltacht through the formulation of a new, more structured partnership with Údarás na Gealtachta. This will ensure that the Council's commitment to developing the arts in the Gaeltacht will be strengthened accordingly.

The Council will continue to support the work of the Donegal Artists Network, in particular the continued development by Letterkenny Arts Centre of the *Donegal Culture* magazine and the Donegal Culture website.

At a local level the Council will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- provide active support for and access to training, performance, exhibition and multi-media collaborative opportunities for professional and amateur groups;
- develop sustained and longer term arts development initiatives - led by professional artists working in community contexts - in areas of the county where such provision is currently low;
- put in place new initiatives in arts education - particularly in music and visual arts - as well as arts initiatives in non-traditional contexts, such as hospitals and day centres.

Action 27: Develop the Touring Arts Programme

The Council, through the Arts Promotion Service will continue to work with a wide variety of local arts groups and venues enabling a broad range of professional theatre and music performances, from Ireland and abroad, to happen throughout the county.

The Council recognises the strategic importance of An Grianán Theatre as a facility which has enabled a huge range of high quality theatre, dance and musical performances to be enjoyed by Donegal audiences, and as a production house which commissions, develops and tours its own productions for the enjoyment of audiences throughout the country.

The Council also recognises the key role of Fada Theatre Company in the provision of high quality, smaller scale work ideally suited to the needs of the county's developing network of small to medium scale venues.

The Council will, during the life of this Action Plan commission and co-fund new theatre and musical works which have a special significance to Donegal, along the lines of recent work such as John Nee's *The Derry Boat*, Fada Theatre Company's productions of *Riders To the Sea*, *Wild Harvest* and *April Bright* and An Grianán Productions' *Translations* and *Big Maggie*. The Council's involvement will be on the basis of the subject matter, the fact that a Donegal writer is involved, or that the work is to be produced by a local company.

Action 28: Enhance Partnership with The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon

1999, in recognition of Donegal County Council's long-standing commitment to arts development throughout the county, The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon selected Donegal as one of three local authorities for inclusion in its new local arts development pilot project, the Local Authority Planning Scheme.

The Council, in partnership with The Arts Council, will make full use of this new scheme to track the long-term effects of large-scale investment in the arts in a local authority area. The Council will, with funding from The Arts Council, invest in excess of £300,000 in the period 2000-2002 in new and existing initiatives in community arts and festivals, in marketing and audience development, traditional music, cross border arts and in a number of new arts development initiatives in the south of the county.

Over the course of the Action Plan, the Council will build on this agreement and further enhance its partnership with The Arts Council.

Action 29: Implement Community Arts Initiatives

The Council, through the Arts Promotion Service, will continue to work closely with artists, arts groups, community development and regional agencies throughout the county in the initiation and joint development of a wide range of arts projects with a community focus.

This will be achieved particularly in the context of the Local Authority Planning Scheme, as described above.

Action 30: Develop the Arts Grants and Emerging Artists' Bursaries Scheme

The Council will advertise the Arts Grants Scheme in the local press in the Spring of each year, and will invite individual artists, arts groups and a wide variety of community development groups with active arts agendas to apply for funding towards specific arts projects and activities. The Council will steadily increase the funding available under the Arts Grants Scheme and will seek to speed up the payment of grants awarded by streamlining the current approval process.

The Council will also seek to build special, longer term funding agreements with a number of specific arts groups and arts initiatives in recognition of the consistently high standards of artistic excellence and innovation which they have attained, locally and nationally. (See also Action 31).

The Council will advertise and administer the Artists Bursaries Scheme in a similar fashion to the Grants Scheme, focusing on younger, emerging artists, musicians etc. The Council will award up to six bursaries of £500 each in 2001 and 2002, and review the operation of the scheme before the end of 2002.

3.3.2 Developing Arts Infrastructure / Public Art

Action 31: Develop Arts Infrastructure Appropriate to Local Needs

The Council recognises the strategic importance of An Grianán Theatre as the county's premier performance arts facility and of Letterkenny Arts Centre as the natural focus for the visual arts in the county. The Council is committed to the continued advocacy of, and adequate funding of, these facilities.

The Council is also committed to assist in the development of the following arts infrastructure:

- the provision of a network of multi-purpose workspaces which are needed for a broad range of arts activities, including artists studios, rehearsal spaces for professional and amateur performance groups, and spaces for arts educational and arts training programmes;
- the equitable development and upgrading of a network of smaller scale regional performance and exhibition facilities around the county, to allow more comprehensive coverage by the Council's Touring Arts Programme and to provide for the infrastructural needs of local arts practitioners.

This will entail the development of increased and sustained capital and revenue funding relationships between the Council and a number of independent, strategically important arts groups, initiatives and infrastructural facilities around the county – along the lines of that already existing with An

Grianán Theatre and, to a limited extent, with the Abbey Centre in Ballyshannon.

The Council will also provide accommodation in key Area Offices to support enhanced Arts Promotion activities at a local level. This will house the provision and dissemination of information on funding, training and employment opportunities, on opportunities for multi-media collaborative projects as well as the provision of pooled administrative, marketing and promotional resources. (see also Action 26).

Action 32: Develop the Public Art Programme

The Council will implement a much enhanced Public Art Programme within the framework of the "Public Art Policy and Strategy", adopted by the Council in 1999. This document was prepared by the Council's Public Art Working Group, an internal working group comprising the County Engineer, County Secretary, Senior Executive Architect, County Librarian, the Manager of Letterkenny Arts Centre, and the Arts Organiser as well as other officials where appropriate. The Group is charged with the overall strategic management, co-ordination and promotion of the Council's Public Art Programme.

The Council will invest an estimated £500,000 in the Public Art Programme over the course of the Action Plan – using funding provided through the Department of the Environment & Local Government's % for Art Scheme. The Council will ensure community participation in the evaluation and selection process for Public Art schemes.

Senior Management will provide active support to the Public Art Working Group in order to direct the Public Art Programme in the interests of artistic excellence, in the interests of the Council and in the broader interests of the community. It is the Council's intention that the day-to-day management and co-ordination of the Public Art Programme will be based at Letterkenny Arts Centre under the direction of a dedicated Public Art Manager, working to the Public Art Working Group.

3.3.3 Developing Arts Festivals

Action 33: Develop the Earagail Arts Festival

The Council will continue to develop the Earagail Arts Festival, which is by far the largest and most ambitious arts event of its kind initiated, developed and managed by any local authority in Ireland.

The county's premier arts and cultural celebration, it had a turnover in 2000 of over £230,000 with over 30,000 people attending a wide range of Festival events. The Festival was selected in 1999 and 2000 as one of Ireland's major Millennium Festivals. It is programmed and managed by the Arts Organiser and the Manager of Letterkenny Arts Centre, working closely with An Grianán Theatre, Udarás na Gaeltachta, Donegal County Tourism Ltd., and a host of

smaller arts and community development groups around the Festival's catchment area. In 1999 and 2000, a part-time Festival Manager was employed in response to the growing demands of this fast developing event.

In the first year of the Action Plan, the Council will establish the Earagail Arts Festival as a limited company, governed by a board of directors with nominees of Donegal County Council and other interested bodies. This will enable the Festival to access significant additional funding in the form of sponsorship from the private sector while at the same time maintaining its community ethos and its link with the Council. The Festival will continue to be based at Letterkenny Arts Centre and the Council will provide annual revenue funding to the event.

The Festival's catchment will continue to focus on Mt. Errigal and will include the three Gaeltacht parishes of Cloch Cheann Fhaola, Gaoth Dobhair and Na Rosa, Letterkenny, the Fanad and Ros a'Goill peninsulas, and where appropriate venues in East Donegal and Inishowen.

Action 34: Initiate an Arts Festival in South Donegal

The Council will, beginning in 2001, progress planning on an arts festival which will feature performances, exhibitions and community arts events in a number of locations around Donegal Bay. Through the Arts Promotion Service, the Council will build on the preliminary work already done to establish and develop an arts festival which will be well rooted in the area, and attract artists and performers of national and international standing.

The proposed Festival will be one of the lead projects undertaken by Donegal County Council with The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon under the Local Authority Planning Scheme.

3.3.4 Progressing Libraries & Arts Projects

Action 35: Develop the Teach Chathail Uí Shearcaigh project

The Council will complete planning for the extension to Teach Chathail Uí Shearcaigh in early 2001, and will work with Údarás na Gaeltachta and The Arts Council in a tri-partite venture, to build and fit out the extension in the first half of the life of this Action Plan. The Council will, through the Archives Service, continue to catalogue and preserve the manuscripts, papers and other materials of Cathal Ó Searcaigh, and, through the Library Service, continue to catalogue his books, and list and maintain his artworks.

Action 36: Develop joint Libraries & Arts initiatives

The Council will continue to develop joint Libraries and Arts initiatives, in particular:

- the *Bealtaine* festival, a festival for older people;
- the *Wainsfest*, a festival of reading, writing, music, drama, and the arts for children and young people, which takes place in Libraries, the Arts Centre, schools and other centres;
- the "Readers & Writers" programme, designed to encourage and facilitate creative writing and promote reading, which has recently been established on a pilot basis;
- writers' residencies, to be based in the Arts Centre, Libraries and possibly the new Area Offices.

3.3 B Arts Centre

In the period to the end of 2004 Donegal County Council will further develop Letterkenny Arts Centre as an Arts Centre for all of Donegal.

The Arts Centre is at an early stage in its development. It has increased incrementally over the three years since becoming operational in 1997, in terms of staff, programme and capital resources. There are, however, major shortcomings in terms of staffing levels, staff remuneration and physical infrastructure to be addressed. The Council will ensure, early in the life of this Action Plan, that the Centre reaches a minimum professional standard and one that is comparable with other Irish arts centres.

3.3.5 *Developing the Arts Centre ~ Policy*

Action 37: Revise the existing artistic policy of the Arts Centre

The artistic policy adopted in 1998 will be revised in light of The Arts Council's Arts Plan 1999 - 2001 and other policy developments. The broad policy objectives will have much in common with the policy objectives of the other elements of Cultural Services, and will echo those of the Arts Plan.

The policy objectives of Letterkenny Arts Centre will include:

- ensuring that arts development meets the public need;
- providing a better and more complete arts service for local people and visitors on a county wide basis;
- complementing existing arts provision and working in partnership with arts, community and statutory organisations;
- supporting social inclusion by providing equal access to arts activity;
- developing arts audiences;
- supporting more public participation in the arts and creating opportunities for children and young people to engage in the arts;
- promoting artistic excellence and innovation;
- supporting the work of artists, arts organisations and artists working in Irish and in traditional arts in County Donegal;
- fostering recognition, acknowledgement, critical assessment and documentation of the arts;
- bringing international arts to the Centre and developing international audiences for Donegal artists and arts projects.

3.3.6 Developing the Arts Centre ~ Programme

Action 38: Develop and manage annual programmes of arts activities and initiatives.

The Council will continue to develop the Arts Centre as the main visual arts resource for County Donegal (in a similar way to the development of An Grianán Theatre as the main performing arts resource for the County). The Centre will adopt a radical education and audience led approach to the visual arts. The Centre will aim to improve the quality of audience experience and to increase audience numbers.

The annual programmes or arts activity will include:

- Visual Arts;
- Performing Arts / Cinema;
- Reading and Writing;
- Education and Participation;
- Outreach / Festivals;
- Information / Promotion;

- Partnership.

[a more detailed listing of programme activities is found in Appendix X].

3.3.7 *Developing the Arts Centre Building*

Action 39: Develop a new integrated arts centre building

Letterkenny Arts Centre has been housed in a single multi purpose space in the basement of the Central Library since the building opened in 1995. Because of the success of the Council's arts promotion work, the space is now inadequate and unsuitable. The Council will develop a new purpose designed integrated arts centre building in Letterkenny. Funding has been sought from the Arts and Cultural Capital Enhancement Support Scheme (ACCESS) 2001 - 2004 provided by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. The plan has been prepared in association with An Grianán Theatre and the preferred location is one adjoining the theatre.

Facilities

- ✓ An integrated arts centre;
- ✓ Galleries;
- ✓ Studio Theatre / Cinema;
- ✓ Workshops;
- ✓ Foyer / Lobby;
- ✓ Other spaces.

[a more detailed description of the facilities is included in Appendix X].

Action 40: Seek other funding sources and partnerships

Donegal County Council will seek other funding sources and partners whatever the outcome of the ACCESS application. Potential funding sources may include Government Departments, EU and US institutions and foundations, etc. Potential partners in addition to An Grianan Theatre may include Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Department of Education (Primary Curriculum Visual Arts), North Western Health Board (Health Promotion Unit), VEC, etc.

3.3.8 *Developing the Management Structure*

Action 41: Develop an appropriate management structure for the Arts Centre

Letterkenny Arts Centre is the only local authority operated arts centre in Ireland, all other arts centres are independent companies limited by guarantee. The Centre will remain within the remit of the County Council for the foreseeable future. The Council will develop a clear management structure for the Centre, early in the life of this Action Plan, which will enable it to operate as a distinct entity within Cultural Services. The Council will further

clarify the respective roles of Letterkenny Arts Centre and County-wide Arts Promotion Service. Letterkenny Arts Centre will use the Agresso system to prepare separate management accounts and the types of financial information required by The Arts Council and other sources. The Council may consider other models for the management of the Arts Centre if compelling reasons for doing so emerge in the process of developing a new integrated arts centre building.

3.4 Action Plan for the Museum Service 2001-2004

In the period to the end of 2004 Donegal County Council will further develop the County Museum and the county-wide Museum Service.

3.4.1 Developing the County Museum building

Action 42: Complete Phase II of the County Museum building

The present museum building was completed in 1992 and includes two exhibition galleries, a workshop, storage facility and offices. This was considered, from the beginning, to be Phase I in the development of the County Museum. The Council is committed to maintaining high standards of service to the community and recognises the Museum's potential to further develop its existing services. The Council will, in partnership with Letterkenny UDC, complete Phase II of the County Museum, beginning in 2001, if funding is

secured. Funding for Phase II has been sought from the Arts and Culture Capital Enhancement Support Scheme (ACCESS) 2001-2004 operated by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands, which would provide 75% of the total costs.

Phase II of the County Museum building will include

Additional Exhibition Facilities 334 sq m

- ✓ the new permanent exhibition will be enhanced through the expansion of the current exhibition themes in a dynamic and informative way and through the addition of a series of specially commissioned film and multimedia presentations. The specially designed displays will also be more accessible to younger visitors and visitors with disabilities;
- ✓ the proposed extension will allow the temporary exhibition space to be closed off while allowing public access to the rest of the building.

Improved Facilities for visitors and staff adapting existing space

- ✓ a new attractive reception area to welcome visitors to the Museum, and provide space for the sale of high quality retail products;
- ✓ a designated area in the Museum to facilitate the needs of special interest and community groups;
- ✓ an area which can be used specifically by school groups for group activities;
- ✓ a research room which will house the files from the Archaeological Survey of County Donegal;
- ✓ additional toilet facilities and a separate staff canteen area.

New Conservation and Storage Facilities 280 sq m

- ✓ as the Museum collection continues to grow extra storage facilities are required to guarantee its preservation;
- ✓ under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 and the National Cultural Institutions Act 1997 Donegal County Museum has been given the status of a "designated place" for the purposes of the Acts. This means that any archaeological object found in the State after the coming into operation of the Acts can be placed in the Museum for safekeeping. New conservation facilities will enable the Museum to undertake the care and preservation of these artefacts to the minimum standards required by legislation;
- ✓ more extensive workshop and storage facilities will enable the museum to improve on its present conservation activities.

Estimated Costs

	<i>Total Cost</i>	<i>DCC Element [25%]</i>
□ Construction	£1,180,000	£295,000
□ Exhibition	£826,000	£206,500
□ Refurbish Existing Build	£300,000	£75,000
□ Other Fitting Out	£35,500	£8,875
□ Total	£2,341,500	

- Donegal County Council Matching Funding £585,375

Action 43: Provide further storage facilities for the Museum

A warehouse is presently being rented at a cost of £7,280 per annum to provide storage space for the Museum Service, in particular for larger objects. This space is satisfactory in the short term but a more suitable space is necessary for the future preservation of the collection. There is room on the present museum site for an extension to the existing storage area. While the Council is hopeful that funding will be secured for Phase II, it will in any case provide extra storage space for the Museum.

3.4.2 Preserving Donegal's material heritage

Action 44: Comprehensively collect artefacts that reflect the heritage of Donegal

The fundamental function of any museum is the acquisition of objects for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment. Collections are a physical link with the past and the accumulation of artefacts is of crucial importance in the transmission of Donegal's cultural and social traditions and history.

The Council will, through the Museum Service, continue to collect the material evidence and associated information relating to the history of Donegal, using all means of acquisition - donation, loan and purchase - so as to ensure the greatest degree of comprehensiveness. This will be done in keeping with the "Donegal County Museum Collection Policy" adopted in 2000 which sets out in detail the principles and procedures involved in collecting artefacts for the Museum. Subjects to be covered include the archaeology, history, folklife, social history, natural history and geology of the county, with special emphasis on those topics and historical periods not already in the collections.

Action 45: Improve the preservation of the intellectual integrity of the museum collections by redesigning the current documentation system

Donegal County Museum plays a unique role as a repository for artefacts gathered from both natural and man-made environments. The very act of collection removes these artefacts from their contexts and although many of them are inherently interesting or aesthetically pleasing it is the close interrelationship with their environment which increases their usefulness and the enjoyment of them by the museum public. Comprehensive documentation and preservation of the non-intrinsic information about an object is a vital museum activity.

The Council will, beginning in 2001, redesign its documentation process by:

- redrafting the current entry record system;

- reviewing and redesigning the system for recording the location of an object;
- devising a system to record movement of objects within the museum;
- drawing up a plan to deal with the accessions backlog;
- creating loans-in and loans-out agreements;
- reviewing the current system for listing all loans;
- designing a system to record objects leaving the Museum;
- ensuring all relevant members of staff are aware of new procedures.

Action 46: Improve the physical integrity of the museum's collections by drafting and implementing a Collections Care Strategy

Conservation and preservation play a crucial role in the Museum's activities. The Museum aims to store, handle, display and use its collection in such a way as to minimise the risk of damage and deterioration, thereby increasing long term access and appreciation of the collection. Conservation encompasses the preservation and restoration of museum premises as well as museum artefacts. The Council will, using the services of a conservator, prepare (by end 2001) and implement a Collections Care Strategy which will encompass all aspects of the preservation and conservation of the Museum's collection including:

- an assessment of the museum building;
- a review of past and current environmental conditions;
- a list of all hazards and threats to the collection, and the strategies for dealing with them;
- a Disaster Plan.

Action 47: Work with other sections of the Council and other organisations involved in the preservation of material heritage

The Council will ensure that the Museum Service shall

- liaise Planning, Roads, Community and Enterprise, and other Council services to promote and protect the heritage of the county;
- co-operate with outside organisations such as Dúchas ~ The Heritage Service and The Heritage Council to preserve the archaeological and historical sites of Donegal;
- investigate the potential of an 'eco-museum' for County Donegal;
- work in tandem with groups such as FÁS, Coillte, Teagasc and the IFA to promote the welfare of the County's heritage.

3.4.3 *Making the Museum more accessible*

Action 48: Devise and implement an Education Policy and Programme

Museums are an important educational resource for lifelong learning and their collections and the information associated with them can be used for educational purposes for people of all ages within the community.

The Council will prepare and publish, early in the life of this Action Plan, a comprehensive Education Policy which will set out the educational principles on which future actions will be based. This will act as an efficient management tool for the organisation of staff, the deployment of resources and the evaluation of standards; and will demonstrate the Museum's commitment to its visitors and potential visitors and their changing needs.

The Education Policy will cover

- the Museum's goals, and strategies for achieving them;
- existing and potential audiences;
- resources available for education;
- the Museum's involvement in the *Wainfest* and *Bealtaine* programmes;
- staff development;
- a review procedure.

Action 49: Use ICT to provide accurate and up to date information on the Museums' collections to the widest audience possible

Information and Communications Technologies are a means to locate the Museum's resources at the centre of lifelong learning.

The Council will

- make the Museum's collections available in electronic form - either on-line or on CD-ROM, or both, and relate this initiative to the digitization of the Central Library's Local Studies material and the Council's archives [see Actions 4, 8 & 62]. Digitisation of the artefacts will improve access to the Museum and its collections and will enable the public to use the computerised collections as a learning resource;
- continue the development of the Museum's specially designed database (Adlib) in order to keep abreast of advances in information technology;
- enhance the Museum website content to open up access to the Museum and its collections to new audiences;
- develop displays that incorporate new technologies and exciting new techniques in Phase II of the County Museum.

All of these developments will only be possible with the purchase of the required software and hardware and the provision of training for the Museum staff.

Action 50: Ensure that exhibitions are educational, entertaining, and accessible

The Council will continue to organise a) Permanent, b) Temporary [in-house] and c) Temporary [visiting] exhibitions, in keeping with the "County Museum Exhibitions Policy".

1. The *Permanent display* incorporates artefacts and associated information relating to the history and pre-history of Donegal.

2. *Temporary in-house exhibitions* are generated by the Museum itself from its own collections and from artefacts on loan or donated by members of the public. These exhibitions cover in more detail topics referred to in the permanent display and subjects relating to Donegal not covered in the permanent display.

3. *Temporary visiting exhibitions* are generated outside the Museum e.g. by other Museums, historical societies, other bodies and occasionally by individuals, which are of general or specific public interest and are of a high standard.

The Council will continue to ensure that all exhibitions in the Museum are:

- tasteful, coherent, accurate and balanced regardless of subject matter;
- informative and relevant to the widest possible audience;
- effective in communicating their message;
- supportive of a variety of learning styles;
- supportive of individual and group experiences;
- empowering, stimulating and fun.

Action 51: Ensure that the Museum is accessible to all members of the community

Individuals have varied backgrounds and have different and changing physical, intellectual and cultural needs. The Council will prepare (beginning in 2001), publish and implement an Access Strategy in recognition of these differences, to develop new audiences and to deepen its relationship with its existing audiences. Such a strategy will address areas such as the need to improve physical access to the Museum and the need to remove any social barriers that exist.

3.4.4 *Promoting Donegal's heritage*

Action 52: Provide an outreach service

The Council will include an exhibition space in the reception area of each of the six electoral Area Office, which may be utilised by the Museum Service for temporary exhibitions. In this way the Museum will reach a wider audience than at present, and expand its services more fully beyond the walls of the building in Letterkenny.

Action 53: Encourage and support other museums and heritage centres in Donegal

Each region of County Donegal has historical validity deserving of museum support. Through the Museum Service the Council will support and be an ally of smaller local museums with advice, information and, where appropriate, resources. The Council will provide support to three main types of centres:

- 1 Museums with potential to be area/district museums;
- 2 Specialist museums;
- 3 Other centres.

1. Museums with potential to become area/district museums

The County Museum's geographical location in such a large county has meant, in the past, that many artefacts go instead to other local museums. The factors which influence the reorganisation and decentralisation of Council services, also influence museum provision in the county.

Through the Museum Service the Council will act in an advisory capacity, providing the museums with professional advice on issues such as documentation, conservation etc. ensuring that they operate within certain agreed standards. Some of the smaller museums are well established with substantial collections of their own and are ideally situated geographically to act as area/district museums. The Museum Service will provide support to enable them to develop using basic guidelines of museum management and collections care.

2. Specialist Museums

These Museums all have substantial collections covering very specific aspects of Donegal history. The Council will, through the Museum Service, encourage them to maintain these collections to the highest standard of museum care. This will include, where possible, encouraging them to:

- employ professional staff, (or if not, to utilise the services of the County Museum within the constraints of the Museum's resources);
- adopt a collections policy;
- properly document their collections;
- generally ensure that these collections are properly preserved as part of the heritage of County Donegal.

3. Other Centres

There are a number of centres, often known as heritage or visitor centres which are largely display centres with high quality, often well researched but static displays. Through the Museum Service the Council will provide support to enable them to develop using basic guidelines of museum management.

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The Council will consider the viability of each centre that seeks funding and take special note of whether they intend to collect artefacts. In the case of centres that already have collections the Council will only consider applications for funding where the centres agree to secure the safety of their collections. The day-to-day administrative tasks of recording, preserving and caring for a collection over many years requires the full-time commitment of trained staff. The lowest possible sustainable level for any museum is the provision of sufficient staff, finance and resources to achieve the aims of collecting, recording, preserving and displaying in order to maintain and develop a high level of activity and to pass on the collection intact.

Action 54: Market Donegal County Museum within the county and beyond

It is the task of marketing to develop and promote the image of Donegal County Museum both within the County and throughout the country.

The Council will prepare (beginning in 2001) and implement a marketing strategy based on a careful assessment of the marketing needs of the Museum and the resources available to meet them. The Council will then develop a marketing plan outlining the aims and objectives of the marketing function within the Museum. It will present information on the current visitor profile, the marketplace within which the Museum operates, the potential for development in the main segments of that market, and the strategies which will be developed to increase the existing customer base and attract new audiences.

3.5 *Action Plan for the Archives Service* ***2001-2004***

In the period to the end of 2004 Donegal County Council will build on the start made in establishing an Archives Service in 1999 / 2000, and develop the service further in terms of services, staffing, and infrastructure.

3.5.1 *Providing Accommodation for Records* ***and Archives***

Donegal County Council will provide purpose designed accommodation for its archives and records, to ensure the long-term preservation of the county archives and to ensure public access to the archives; and to ensure efficient management and disposal of Council records.

Action 55: Provide a Records Centre

The Council will provide a purpose built Records Centre close to the County House which will house semi-active records on a structured basis. The Centre will be well-managed and staffed sufficiently to provide a full corporate service, including the regular retrieval of semi-active records for administrative purposes. The Council will begin planning for the Centre in 2001.

Facilities 880 sq m.

- ✓ staff: including office, reception area; kitchen, cloakroom;
- ✓ storage area with temperature and relative humidity control;
- ✓ general: document reception/sorting area/ loading bay, plant room.

Estimated Costs

□ Construction incl. Fees	£900,000
□ Shelving / Fitting Out	£100,000
□ Total	£1,000,000

Action 56: Build an Archives Centre

The County Council will provide a permanent, safe and secure purpose-built Archives Centre to house and preserve the county archives, located in Lifford. This building will accommodate the archives that have been preserved to date as well as acquisitions of future local public and private archives. Its two primary purposes will be preservation of archives and the provision of a service to the public. Funding may be available from the Department of the Environment & Local Government, and the Heritage Council. The Council will begin planning for this facility in 2001.

Facilities 500 – 600 sq m

- ✓ staff: office for archivist and other staff, conservation/processing workshop, kitchen, cloakroom, conservation room;
- ✓ public: research room, reception area, exhibition area, meeting room for lectures, talks etc; toilet facilities;
- ✓ storage area with temperature and relative humidity control, a dedicated area used only for storage of paper and parchment archives; separate storage area for photographs, electronic archives and film, which require a colder climate;
- ✓ general: document reception/sorting area/ loading bay.

Estimated Costs

	<i>Total Cost</i>	<i>DCC Element [25%]</i>
□ Construction incl. Fees	£1,050,000	£262,500
□ Shelving / Fitting Out	£250,000	£62,500

□ Total	£1,300,000	£325,000
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Action 57: Provide a temporary facility for archives

Until the Archives Centre becomes available, the Council will, from the beginning of this Action Plan, make proper arrangements for the management, custody, care and conservation of its archives by housing them in a central temporary accommodation. The temporary facilities will be suitable to be adapted for the storage of archives, stored with shelving which is of a standard to accommodate archives, be secure from fire, theft or vandalism, be dry, free from damp and of a moderate temperature and relative humidity.

3.5.2 *Developing an Archives Service*

Action 58: Develop acquisitions

The Council will develop a proactive policy in the acquisition of archives collections, which will attract a wider variety of user to the Archives Service. In particular the Council will

- from the beginning of this Action Plan, survey local solicitors, community groups and schools in Donegal which may be willing to donate material to the Archives Service;
- in the longer-term, undertake acquisition surveys of particular individuals, groups or businesses (for example, charities and caring organisations, factories, fisheries, farming or tourism groups; sporting organisations, retired local politicians) with a view to acquiring collections which will enhance the recorded heritage of the county.

Action 59: Develop a county-wide archives service

The Council will develop a full-time, county-wide archives service to the public in order to ensure the proper care and management of its archives. The Council will give priority to:

- finalising the survey of county archives and centralising them in suitable (initially temporary) premises;
- listing, arranging and placing in proper storage the County Archives collections;
- developing a phased conservation programme for the most fragile of the collections;
- working on a phased programme of preservation microfilming of the County's most valuable collections, starting with the Council Minutes and the Board of Guardian records;

- adhering to recognised standards for the development of archives services;
- co-operating with the Urban District Councils of Letterkenny, Buncrana and Bundoran, and Ballyshannon Town Commissioners, in order to provide for the management, custody, care and conservation of the records and archives of these local authorities and to provide for public access to these archives;
- co-operating with the North Western Health Board, the Harbour Commissioners, and other public bodies in the County in relation to the protection of their archives.

Action 60: Make the best use of available resources

The Council will avail of all possible resources, including financial resources, in order to build a complete Archives Service throughout the life of this Action Plan. In particular the Council will, through the Archives Service

- seek outside funding for the development of the Archives Service, including for specific projects;
- develop its relationship with the Heritage Council and other funding institutions;
- keep abreast of all developments in the archives profession and continue professional training, particularly in information technology;
- co-operate with other local authority archivists on issues common to all local archives services.

Action 61: Cuidiú leis an nGaeilge

The Council will, through the Archives Service contribute wherever possible to the support of the Gaelic language. In particular the Council will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- acquire Gaelic language archival collections of cultural and historic significance;
- generate and make widely available bi-lingual lists of archival material.

3.5.3 Developing Awareness and Access

Action 62: Develop awareness of archives

The Council will develop awareness of the importance and relevance of archives for our national and local heritage, and generate a greater demand for access from within the wider community. The Council, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- build and extend links with the local community, particularly local history groups, research institutions, other local archives, heritage and cultural associations;
- develop an education policy, by encouraging use of archives, particularly by history and geography students at second and third level; and by increasing awareness of the County Archives as a resource for teachers and students at all levels;
- take part in *Wainfest* and *Bealtaine* festivals;
- organise and take part in events such as exhibitions, receptions, talks, lectures and workshops, which highlight the collections of the County Archives and their significance, in co-operation with other outside cultural and heritage organisations;
- undertake joint Council initiatives, such as exhibitions, in liaison with Library, Museum, and Arts and also with other Sections of the Council, especially those which have generated/continue to generate high-quality archives;
- develop the County Archives web pages to include updated catalogues / lists and acquisitions of archives;
- generate publicity through use of media, including local newspapers and radio;
- contribute to archival, historical and cultural journals and newsletters;
- prepare and publish a leaflet outlining the services available in the County Archives.

Action 63: Facilitate access

The Council will facilitate access to the county's archives by the public, and maximise the use of archives for social, political, historical, economic and cultural research. The Council will, during the course of this Action Plan

- create comprehensive finding aids, through investment in a suitable archives database;
- maximise the use of information and communications technologies in the creation and development of finding aids, without lowering standards in descriptive practice [see Actions 4, 8 & 49];
- make finding aids ultimately available online, at the County Archives;
- make the finding aids accessible via the County Archives Website pages;
- produce a comprehensive Guide to the Archives of Donegal County Council. It is planned to have such a guide within three years, which should also be accessible via the Website and which will be regularly updated;
- create research facilities of the highest standard, including a well-staffed research room with flexible opening hours, and easy access for all, including the disabled.

3.5.4 Developing Records Management

Action 64: Develop a long-term Records Management programme

The Council will establish an efficient records management programme as a Corporate Services function, which will track the life cycle of all records within the Council's jurisdiction, from creation to disposal or permanent preservation in the County Archives. The Council will, from the beginning of this Action Plan

- ensure that no records will be destroyed without the sanction, in writing, of the Council's designated Certifying Officer, following consultation with the Archivist and the Section in which the records were created;
- carry out a complete survey of all the records held by the Council; based on the results of the survey, in conjunction with staff of the Council, records retention schedules will be created for each section;
- liaise with other local authority archivists and Fol officers in the creation of a national records retention schedule for all common classes of local authority archives;
- devise a policy on electronic records, including email, and initiate a programme to include preservation of electronic archives;
- utilise the Council's Intranet to develop a corporate records management service;
- prepare a Disaster Plan to protect all records and archives.

Action 65: Improve short-term records accommodation

Until the Records Centre becomes available, the Council will make proper arrangements for the management of its semi-active records by housing them in a central temporary accommodation. The Council will seek to ensure that the temporary facilities are

- suitable to be adapted for the storage of semi-active records;
- secure from fire, theft or vandalism;
- dry, and free from damp;
- of a moderate temperature and relative humidity.

Action 66. Develop a phased records management programme

The Council will introduce a phased programme of records management beginning early in 2001. This programme will include the following elements:

- records transferred from Sections of the Council and from Area Offices and other locations around the county to the above temporary facility will be removed from filing cabinets, box-listed and shelved on mobile shelving in an orderly fashion;
- a record of files in the temporary records centre will be made onto a database;
- retrieval of records from the temporary facility will be supervised or undertaken by archives/records management staff;

- the programme can only be implemented from 2001 with the addition of one full-time member of staff to the Archives/Records Management Service.

3.6 *The Human Resource*

In order to facilitate the improvement of existing services and the development of new services, the human resources available to Donegal County Council Cultural Services must be strengthened. All of the actions set out above are predicated on an increase in staffing, and an improvement in grading and conditions for staff. The public make increasing demands from the Cultural Services, demands which must be responded to. The success of for example the Central Library and Buncrana Community Library and the Earagail Arts Festival have created a situation whereby the services cannot meet the demands being made without improvements in conditions, in staffing structures, and opportunities for training and career and personal development.

In response to both the *Better Local Government* and *Branching Out: a new public library* documents published by the Department of the Environment & Local Government, the County Librarian and senior staff have made proposals for a new staffing structure for Cultural Services in County Donegal. In these proposals a systematic approach is taken to the development of

new organizational structures for Libraries, Arts, Museum and Archives. These proposals are currently being reviewed by senior management, and form the backdrop to Chapter 3.6 of this Plan.

The proposals are developmental; they look ahead to what needs to be done in the new century. Their purpose is to put in place an adequately staffed organization which is capable of meeting the increasing demands for quality Libraries, Arts, Museum and Archives services, having regard to the tasks to be performed at the various levels and the quantity of such work. One key aim is to provide the required number of managerial roles at each level - in particular to manage and develop service points – with the specialist and administrative support needed at county-wide functional level. The provision of sufficient 'front-line' staff to provide an adequate direct service to the public is the other key aim.

Better Local Government and Branching Out: a new public library assign new roles and new responsibilities to librarians and other cultural staff, and in particular to the managers of the services at different levels. Cultural Services managers are expected to step up to new responsibilities in relation to:

- ✓ planning for the service;
- ✓ information & communications technologies;
- ✓ enhanced opening hours;
- ✓ social inclusion;
- ✓ forging links at local level

and the Council recognises that this can only happen in the context of a new staffing structure.

3.6.1 Recruitment

Action 67: Improve procedures for the recruitment of staff

The Council will review the recruitment process in the context of Re-organisation and Decentralisation with a view to speeding it up so that permanent and temporary vacancies at all levels are filled without delay. Established Council procedures will be followed to ensure openness and fairness in filling vacancies.

The Council recognises that staff must be retained following recruitment so that a consistent high-quality service can continue to be provided. In today's employment situation good working conditions make the difference between having to continuously fill vacancies, and retaining staff in specialist areas who themselves grow as part of a constantly improving service. The Council recognises that Cultural Services are heavily dependent on staff, and that all staff members have a right to expect that their employer is committed to their personal and professional development.

3.6.2 *Libraries: the Human Resource*

Action 68: Provide an appropriate Staffing Structure for the Library Service

The Council recognizes that it is as important to fully staff existing developed branch libraries as it is to open new service points. While the public is already making good use of developed Libraries, it is essential that the level of service expected is consistently delivered. With increased staff numbers, the Council will be in a position to enhance library opening hours, including evening and Saturday opening, and expand other areas of service in response to public need.

The Council has begun an analysis of staffing needs in the Library Service, both in terms of numbers and grades, and will, through the *Better Local Government / Branching Out* process currently under way, implement a staffing structure for the Library Service based on accepted national norms, in consultation with staff and their representatives.

Action 69: Provide appropriate training for Library staff

The Council will continue to provide training and development for Library staff as part of its human resource development policy, and in line with the "Staff Training & Education" policy adopted for the Library Service in 1996. The Council will provide / support

- induction training for new staff, backed up by a staff handbook and procedures manuals;
- short courses in specialist areas such as local history and children's literature, provided in-service or out-sourced;
- general courses such as customer care, first aid, public speaking, ICT, etc., provided in-service or out-sourced;
- professional librarianship courses.

The Council will put in place measures to encourage a research frame of mind in Library staff. This will mean the facilitation of field trips, active involvement in professional associations, contributing articles to journals and newsletters in the fields of librarianship, historical and cultural studies, and so on.

3.6.2 *Arts : the Human Resource*

Action 70: Provide an appropriate Staffing Structure for Arts County-wide

The Council recognises that additional administrative support is required for its Arts Promotion work to achieve its potential, and that this requires the location of new, appropriately resourced, Local Arts Officers in key Area Offices, as well as the provision of assistance to the existing Arts Organiser. The Council has begun an analysis of staffing needs in Arts Promotion, both in terms of numbers and grades, and will, through the *Better Local Government* process currently under way, implement a staffing structure for Arts Promotion based on accepted national norms, in consultation with staff and their representatives, in particular recognising the role of the head of Arts Promotion in the staffing structure.

Action 71: Provide appropriate Staffing Structure at Letterkenny Arts Centre

The Council recognises the compliment of full time core staff which was identified in the recent review as a minimum requirement to deliver the current level of activity. The need for adequate full time staff is increased as a result of the uncertainties and inadequacies of the FÁS CE scheme (the most recent scheme ended on November 10th 2000).

The Council has begun an analysis of staffing needs in the Arts Centre, both in terms of numbers and grades, and, bearing the recent review of the Arts Centre in mind, intends, in the context of the *Better Local Government* process currently under way, that an appropriate staffing structure will be put in place in the Arts Centre early in the life of this Action Plan.

Action 72: Prepare a Staff Training Plan for the Arts Centre

The Council will, through the Arts Centre Manager and the Training & Development Officer, carry out an assessment of staff training needs and prepare a staff training programme, which will include

- specifically designed training days by external consultants in health and safety, fire prevention, customer care etc.;
- Donegal County Council run in-service courses in ICT etc.;
- IPA / Donegal County Council run courses in specific management topics, of one or more days duration;
- Arts Centre in house training in issues relating to arts management;
- allocation of study time and assistance towards fees for appropriate courses;
- an active programme of skills sharing between staff members;
- attendance at external conferences and meetings;
- attendance at external arts events;
- establishment of an arts library.

3.6.4 *Museum: the Human Resource*

Action 73: Provide an appropriate Staffing Structure for the Museum

The future development of the County Museum as a resource for education and tourism and the implementation of its key strategies are dependent upon an increase in staffing levels within the Museum. The Council recognizes the need for an appropriate staffing structure for the County Museum and the county-wide Museum Service so that the Museum Service may be a truly 'County' service.

The Council has begun an analysis of staffing needs in the Museum Service, both in terms of numbers and grades, and will, through the *Better Local Government* process currently under way, implement a staffing structure for the Museum Service based on accepted national norms, in consultation with staff and their representatives.

Action 74: Provide appropriate training for Museum staff

The Council will provide training for new and existing staff and will

- assess the training needs of staff;
- source appropriate training courses;
- allocate resources and time to training requirements.

The Council will provide or source three main types of training:

- in house - using the expertise and knowledge of staff already employed in the Museum. This training will take place early in the employment of new staff;
- Donegal County Council continuing training courses – organised by the Training Section of the Council, these courses will encompass subjects such as ICT training e.g. ECDL, presentation skills, customer relations, health and safety and stress management;
- specialist training courses – such courses are organised by IPCRA (Irish Professional Conservator's and Restorers Association), the Northern Ireland Museums Council, the Irish Museums Association and Business 2 Arts (Cothú) and incorporate a wide range of specialist subjects such as conservation, education in museums, reminiscence work, exhibitions.

If training is required that does not fall within the scope of any of the above it will be sourced and the relevant staff member allocated the time and resources to undertake the chosen course.

3.6.5 *Archives: the Human Resource*

The Council recognises that increased levels of staffing in the Archives are needed to ensure the Service develops in the short term. Staff will be fully

trained and motivated and committed to taking part in the building of the Service.

Action 75: Provide an appropriate Staffing Structure for the Archives Service

The Council has begun an analysis of staffing needs in the Archives Service, both in terms of numbers and grades, and will, through the *Better Local Government* process currently under way, implement a staffing structure for the Archives Service based on accepted national norms, in consultation with staff and their representatives.

Action 76: Provide appropriate training for Archives staff

The Council will provide training for new and existing staff and will:

- assess the training needs of staff;
- allocate resources and time to training requirements;
- source appropriate training courses.

3.7 Funding

3.7.1 Revenue Funding

Action 77: Provide funding in annual Estimates

The Council will provide sufficient funding in its annual Estimates for each of the years 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 to achieve the targets in this Action Plan. The Council will, in particular provide for

- the staff costs which will ensue from the proposed developments;
- the staff costs which will emerge from the *Better Local Government / Branching Out* process;
- the operational costs of the proposed new developments.

Action 78: Continue to develop the Library Bookfund

The Council will build on the significant advances made on the Library Bookfund in the period 1995-1999, and meet the national target of spending £2.50 per head by 2002. The Council will meet the commitments agreed with the Department of the Environment & Local Government, as follows:

	<i>Total Bookfund</i>	<i>DCC</i>	<i>DoE&LG</i>
2001	£285,000	£228,000	£57,000
2002	£325,000	£265,000	£60,000

Thereafter the Council will continue to develop the Bookfund in line with the development of the Library Service.

Action 79: Improve funding for local arts development

The Council will, in partnership with the Arts Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta, LEADER and other bodies, continue the very significant growth in investment in the local arts development of the County. In particular the Council will continue to develop resources for initiatives brought forward by Arts Promotion staff, as well as grants to be paid to local arts groups in the County.

3.7.5 Capital Funding

Action 80: Secure Capital Funding for Library, Arts, Museum and Archives infrastructure

The Council will seek funding from national, and where appropriate EU, agencies to enable the projects listed above to be realized. The Council will, beginning in 2001, commence discussions with the Department of the Environment and Local Government, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, the Arts Council, the Heritage Council, and other funding agencies such as IFI, the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, and other relevant bodies. The Council will continue to investigate the possibility of co-operating with local development groups to provide library and other buildings, such as the successful co-operation with Ramelton Heritage & Development Association which enabled the provision of Ramelton Community Library, and with Forbairt na Rosann which enabled the provision of Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann.

Action 81: Put in place matching funding for capital projects

The Department of the Environment & Local Government provides 75% funding for construction and fitting out of new library and archives projects, and 50% funding for stock and equipment. The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands provides 75% funding for the construction and fitting out of arts and museum projects. The Council will provide matching funding for the projects listed above, following agreement with the two Departments. This matching funding may be provided from the Council's own revenue, or sourced from other eligible agencies or the private sector.

[see Appendix 1].

3.8 *Implementation & Evaluation*

3.8.1 *Implementation*

Action 82: Put in place an implementation process

The Council will establish measures to ensure the implementation of the Actions set out above, in the context of the new Strategic Policy Committees and the Directorates of Service. These measures will involve *inter alia* the setting up of a Programme Review Group of relevant staff at the appropriate levels of the organization. The Council intends that this Group will be in place as soon as discussions under *Better Local Government / Branching Out* are concluded.

3.8.2 *Evaluation*

Action 83: Implement the evaluation process for the Library Service

The Council will fully implement the "Evaluating Performance" document adopted in 2000. In particular the Council will

- circulate to staff and public the performance measures and indicators which will be used from 01/01/2001;
- set targets for each of these;
- collect and analyse relevant data.

Action 84: Put in place an evaluation process for Arts Promotion

The Council will finalise measures, in association with the Arts Council, which will regularly monitor and evaluate the effect of the various Arts programmes. This evaluation process will contain the following key elements:

- a statement of the key objectives of the programme and an outline as to how these objectives should be realized;
- a description of the arts sector in Donegal and an outline of the cultural, social and economic context in which the arts development programme will work;
- detailed documentation of the programme – by written word, photographic, audio and video recording;
- a schedule of the appropriate performance measures and performance indicators which will be used.

